

Sinaiticus



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A NEW FRAGMENT OF THE CODEx SINAITICUS DISCOVERED AT SAINT CATHERINE'S

The discovery of a fragment of the Codex Sinaiticus by Nikolas Sarris, a member of the Saint Catherine's Library conservation project team, made international headlines in 2009. 'Fragment from world's oldest Bible found hidden in Egyptian monastery', reported *The Independent*. 'A fragment of the world's oldest Bible, the Codex Sinaiticus, has been uncovered hidden underneath the binding of an 18th-century book in an Egyptian monastery', said *The Telegraph*. *The Economist*, *Le Figaro*, *La Repubblica* and *To Vima* all carried the story, which was featured on the BBC Radio 5 'Drive' programme.

Nikolas Sarris made the discovery while researching his doctoral dissertation on the bookbindings at Saint Catherine's. He was reviewing photographs of the bindings when the distinctive writing on the fragment caught his attention. He confided his suspicions to Prof. Nicholas Pickwood, Leader of the Saint Catherine's library project, and to Father Justin, the Saint Catherine's librarian, who confirmed his hunch. Sarris had made 'a new new find', as *The Economist* put it, referring to the 1975 discovery of early manuscripts at the monastery including a dozen leaves and numerous fragments of the Codex Sinaiticus. Father Justin announced the news at the British Library conference marking the online publication of the Codex Sinaiticus in July 2009. The paper he presented, 'The Conservation and Photography of the Codex Sinaiticus at Saint Catherine's Monastery: Not Quite Finished', was published jointly with Nikolas Sarris.

The discovery of the fragment is one of the exciting outcomes of the Saint Catherine Foundation's work at the monastery. It proves that academic research, cultural conservation and charitable support can pay unexpected dividends.



The inner face of the right board of Greek MS 2289: a fragment of the Codex Sinaiticus is visible through the pastedown.

www.saintcatherinefoundation.org

SOUTH WING PROJECT NEWS

Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities granted planning authorization for the South Wing Project in May 2009, and the work to renovate the Saint Catherine's library looked set to begin. The books and manuscripts were cleaned, labelled and packed, temporary storage was made ready and the process to select a main contractor for the construction work started.

Unfortunately, recent Egyptian regulations require the monastery to obtain planning permission from the Local Technical Committee of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the local army authorities. Some changes to the architectural designs may delay the application for these all-important approvals. Look for news about the project schedule on the foundation's website: www.saintcatherinefoundation.org. We hope that the wheels of bureaucracy will soon turn in the project's favour.

OXFORD CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR 27 NOVEMBER

The Saint Catherine Foundation is organizing, with its Oxford members, a Study Day in memory of Professor Ihor Ševčenko on Saturday, 27 November 2010, at Oxford University's Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies. The theme of the conference, 'Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai, Its Manuscripts and their Conservation', is a subject that will interest both Oxford's scholarly community and the foundation's friends and members.

The programme illustrates the prominent part played in the field of manuscript studies by scholars of Oxford University. The speakers include Prof. Cyril Mango, Bywater and Sotheby Professor Emeritus of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature and Dr Sebastian Brock, Emeritus Reader in Syriac Studies, both members of the London Board; Nigel Wilson, Emeritus Fellow of Lincoln College; Prof. Robert W. Thomson, Calouste Gulbenkian Professor Emeritus of Armenian Studies; Dr Mary MacRobert, Anne Pennington Fellow and Tutor in Russian, and Dr Lukas Schachner and Dr Georgi Parpulov, Departmental Lecturers in Byzantine Archaeology and Art.

The morning session will begin with a talk on 'The Sinai Monastery that Justinian Built' by Prof. Peter Grossmann of the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo, who has surveyed the monastery buildings. Prof. Mango will recall the contribution made to the study of the Sinai monastery by Ihor Ševčenko, member of the New York Board, past Visiting Fellow of both All Souls and Wolfson colleges and member of the Editorial Board of Oxford Studies in Byzantium, in his talk on 'Ihor Ševčenko and the Sinai Monastery'. After a break for coffee, Prof. Nicholas Pickwood, Director of the Ligatus Research Centre at the University of the Arts London, will discuss the programme of manuscript conservation at Saint Catherine's. The next

lecture and afternoon sessions will focus primarily on manuscripts copied at Sinai (Dr Nancy Ševčenko) and on the Greek (Dr Georgi Parpulov), Syriac and Arabic (Dr Sebastian Brock), Armenian and Georgian (Prof. Robert W. Thomson) and Slavonic (Dr Mary MacRobert) manuscripts in the Sinai library.

The full programme and further details will be sent to the members of the foundation closer to the time.

ŠEVČENKO FUND ESTABLISHED

Professor Ihor Ševčenko was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation from 2000. He was an astute contributor to board deliberations in New York, always quick to share his considerable knowledge of Saint Catherine's Monastery and its manuscripts, and a lively and urbane presence at fundraising events around the world. He will be greatly missed by all at the foundation and monastery.

In honour of their friend and colleague, the American Associates have established the Ševčenko Fund for the conservation of the Glagolitic and other Slavonic manuscripts at Saint Catherine's, which Professor Ševčenko long studied and loved so well.

Contributions to the fund should be sent to the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation, 485 Madison Avenue – Suite 200, New York, NY 10022.



One of 28 leaves removed from Slavonic MS 37, the *Euchologium Sinaiticum*, discovered in Saint Catherine's Monastery in 1975. The Ševčenko Fund will support the conservation of this important manuscript and others.

REVIEW

J. Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai: How Two Lady Adventurers Found the Hidden Gospels* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2009)

SEBASTIAN BROCK



Margaret Gibson with the cook, the waiter, camel drivers and Bedouin outside the convent walls. Reproduced by permission of Westminster College, Cambridge.

The careers of the indomitable Scottish twin sisters, Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson (nées Smith), were closely associated with St Catherine's Monastery (see the 1997 issue of *Sinaiticus*). Entirely self taught and both widowed young, they first visited the Monastery in 1892, in the company of J. Rendel Harris. No doubt partly thanks to their having picked up Modern Greek on an earlier visit to Greece and Cyprus, they won the confidence of the Librarian, Father Galakteon, as a result of which they were allowed access to the Monastery's rich collection of Syriac and Christian Arabic manuscripts, for which they eventually provided the catalogues. It was on this first visit that they came across and photographed folios from the manuscript that was to make them famous, the Old Syriac translation of the Gospels, hidden away as the under-writing of a later collection of (appropriately!) *Lives of Women Saints* (hence the *'Hidden Gospels'* of the book's title). Once the undertext had been identified back in Cambridge, and its significance as an extremely early translation of the Gospels realized, a further visit to attempt to read more of the manuscript, which today is known as the 'Sinaiticus Syriacus', was imperative, and for this they were accompanied, not only by Rendel Harris, but also by two formidable Cambridge scholars, F.C. Burkitt and R.L. Bensly (Bensly was accompanied by his wife, with whom the two sisters clearly did not see eye to eye: there are rival accounts of the expedition). The process of deciphering the undertext, obscured by the upper writing, was a slow one, requiring yet further visits by the sisters, and it was only in 1910 that Agnes Lewis published what she regarded as her final reading of the undertext. This remains the standard edition

still today, a century later, a remarkable testimony to the high quality of her work; it is true that one may hope that at some time in the future new techniques of digital imaging for reading the undertexts of palimpsests, at present in the course of development, will make it possible for much more of this extremely important biblical manuscript to be read, but this will never diminish the value of the pioneer work on it done by the two sisters, together with Burkitt, Bensly, and Harris.

The only other surviving manuscript of the Old Syriac Gospels, discovered half a century earlier, has acquired the name 'Curetonianus', after its discoverer, William Cureton. The Sinai palimpsest, however, has never come to be known as the 'Lewisianus'; nevertheless Agnes Lewis clearly regarded it with a fond protectiveness, and this was to prove fortunate, for when, on one subsequent visit to St Catherine's, she noticed that a folio had been removed from the precious manuscript, she at once put a note in a scholarly journal stating that if the culprit (clearly an over-eager western scholar) returned it to her anonymously she would replace it in the manuscript. Some years ago, when I was cataloguing the Syriac fragments from the 'New Finds', I had the opportunity to check to see whether or not the folio in question was back in place - and it was!

Although the discovery of this second manuscript of the Old Syriac Gospels was certainly the sisters' most famous find in the Library of St Catherine's, it was by no means their only one, and their many other publications of important texts in Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and Christian Arabic all remain highly appreciated by scholars today. Furthermore, it was a Hebrew fragment purchased by the sisters in Cairo, which was identified by their friend Solomon Schechter as containing the lost Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus, that led Schechter to travel to Cairo where he was able to locate the now famous Cairo Geniza with its hoard of fragmentary old manuscripts (a great many of which are, as a result, today in the Cambridge University Library).

Although there is an earlier narrative of the lives of the twin sisters, by A. Whigham Price (*The Ladies of Castlebrae*, 1985), the author has on occasion allowed his imagination to embroider the story, and so there remained ample scope for a more detailed biography, based more closely on the various published and archival sources available. This need has been admirably met here in Janet Soskice's sympathetic, well-researched and highly readable account. With the comparative ease of travel for the modern visitor to the Monastery, it is salutary to be reminded of the rigors and many difficulties (not to mention dangers) of the lengthy journey there in the last decade of the 19th century, much of which they undertook on foot, in order to avoid the discomfort of prolonged periods riding on camels. In the case of an armchair the modern reader can now sit back and enjoy the lively description that Janet Soskice gives of their various adventures, as well as of their remarkable achievements.

DR SEBASTIAN BROCK is Emeritus Reader in Syriac Studies at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, and an Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College.

FATHER JUSTIN'S BLOG: MOVING THE LIBRARY AT SAINT CATHERINE'S



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In May of 2009, a team of conservators arrived at Saint Catherine's Monastery to begin packing up the library. In an effort to keep members of the Saint Catherine Foundation informed about this important work, Father Justin would periodically send e-mails, with photographs and brief descriptions. While it proved impossible to incorporate these into the Foundation website, we did want to share with readers of *Sinaiticus* these brief and informal notes, with some of the accompanying photographs.

On **Wednesday, May 6**, conservators arrived at Saint Catherine's Monastery, to begin closing down the library. This was the first step towards moving all of the books out of the library, to allow for the renovation of the library building.

The team was led by Nicholas Pickwood, who has headed the conservation programs funded by the Saint Catherine Foundation. It also included Caroline Bendix, who has much experience in moving important libraries, having worked for the National Trust and for colleges in both Oxford and Cambridge. The third member of the team was Thanasis Velios, who had developed a barcode tagging system to allow us to track all of the books and manuscripts. Maria Argyrou and Marco di Bella also arrived that Wednesday. They had worked at Saint Catherine's on the manuscript assessment teams, and are familiar with the Sinai materials. Father Ignatios was also assigned to help in the library for this project.

The first morning was spent moving tables into position, and placing tools and materials in sequence.

Thanasis then demonstrated the input devices that scan each book for number and language. The dimensions of each book are keyed in, and the worker notes whether the book is in need of further protection. The input devices transmit this information to a central computer through a wireless system, and Thanasis can monitor the results from his home in Wales. He retains administrative control for the database, and helps us out when we run into problems **(1)**.

Nicholas Pickwood cut about 12,000 slips and attached the first barcodes. These were placed into the books. The language and number of each book is printed under the code. Father Ignatios continued with this task, and the first books began to move through the system. On Friday, we were joined by six other conservators. By Friday evening, Nicholas and Thanasis saw that everything was working as it should, and they returned to England the following day.

After a book has been tagged, it is cleaned by brushing the dust towards a vacuum cleaner intake that had been covered with muslin. This ensures that the cleaning is done carefully **(2)**. The next step is to read the language and barcode number with the input device, and then add the measurements of the book. If the book needs a book shoe or phase box, we will already have the necessary dimensions.

The books are wrapped in a special acid-free tissue that was brought from England. The slip with the code is attached to the outside of the wrapped book. Each book will be tracked when it is packed into its storage crate, allowing any book to be retrieved from storage if this is necessary. It will be tracked again when the books are removed from storage. Each book can then be accounted



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for, through the entire process of moving the books into storage, and returning them after the completion of the renovation.

The photograph (3) shows the entire workflow, from the station where the number slips are assembled and each book is tagged, through the cleaning, to the station where the barcode and the dimensions of each book are entered into the system. The books are then wrapped and assembled in order, and returned to the shelves, which have been cleaned of dust. Sheets behind the workers protect the cleaned and packaged books from further dust.

By **Saturday evening, May 16**, the team had completed a total of 6,429 books. They will work here for another two weeks, by which time we plan to have completed the remaining 3,000 Greek numbered books, and a further 2,000 Greek books in the Old Library that have never been numbered. We will also tag materials in the monastery archive, and if possible, begin with the manuscripts.

We have located a company in Alexandria that makes quality plastic storage cases. Caroline Bendix did a lot of number crunching, and determined that we needed 1,390 of one size, and 33 of a second size. An order for these is being placed, and we hope they can reach us soon. During June, I will be responsible for cleaning and boxing the books in the New Library, with the help of other members of the community.

It is a daunting task to close up a library that is so complex and so significant as the library at Saint Catherine's Monastery. Each item must be accounted for, and treated

with the greatest care. The project would be overwhelming, were it not for the expert assistance that we are receiving, drawing on the experience and skills of others.

May 6, the day we began, was the feastday of Saint George, April 23 on the Old Calendar. As I was moving a number of books from the New Library to the Old, one of the books opened and a printed icon of Saint George slipped out. I was very glad to see the icon. It seemed an assurance that all would go well.

The conservation team left Sinai on **May 27**, except for Caroline Bendix, who stayed on one more day to discuss plans for the next session. Maria Argyrou also stayed on one more day, to celebrate Ascension at the monastery, before returning to Greece. During the time they were here, we managed to clean, wrap, and tag all of the early printed books. The number of books seemed to multiply as we came to the shelves at the end of the library. In all, there were some 13,500 printed books in the Old Collection. These are now all neatly wrapped in white tissue, waiting to be placed into storage boxes and moved to the storeroom below (4).

We next began to clean, wrap, and tag all of the books in the Sinai Archive. Hemeid attached barcodes to slips of paper. Each book was cleaned, and then wrapped. They were returned to cupboards in sequence, waiting to be packed into storage cases.

We had time to begin with the manuscripts. This was an experiment to test procedures, and to estimate the time required to clean, wrap, tag, box, and move the manuscripts.

Barcodes were placed with the matching manuscript (5). Each manuscript was carefully cleaned. They were then wrapped (6). Manuscripts with metal fittings or more elaborate metal bindings were wrapped with both tissue and bubble wrap, to protect the binding, and to prevent the metal from scraping against other bindings.

The stairs to the balcony, where the manuscripts are shelved, are very steep. To be able to access the manuscripts more safely, Father Daniel created a hoist. Manuscripts are placed into a padded case, which is then slowly lowered to a padded table. From there, they are tagged, cleaned, and wrapped. The hoist can be moved to different places within the library, as we work our way around the room. The first manuscripts were returned to the shelves, though in the next work phase later this year, they will be placed into storage cases and taken to storerooms.

On **Tuesday, June 9**, a truck delivered 400 plastic storage cases and sixteen rolls of bubble wrap (7). This was the first shipment, since all together we will need about 1,400 storage cases for the books and manuscripts. It was a great day to see all of these stacked at the monastery entrance, waiting to be taken inside. Nine workers carried everything in, working in relays. We used the new carts that Father Daniel had made when we got to the top floor. A little less than two hours later, everything was safely stored in the large reception room, beneath the portraits of former Archbishops of Sinai. By the end of that week, we had cleaned and boxed all of the reference books from the office. This took twenty-four boxes.

The books in the modern library are vacuumed using a special vacuum cleaner that has a very gentle suction, and then placed spine down in the storage crates. It is important that they are packed fully supported, without any distortion, since they will remain in these storage crates for the duration of construction. Bubble wrap is used to fill any spaces, so that the books do not shift. The long ends of the two pieces of plastic used to line the crate are then folded over, and the lid put in place. Later, strapping will be added to hold the lid in place. For the crates in the new library, we mark each crate sequentially, and then keep a ledger where we write the general subject matter of the books. This will help us when the books are unpacked, so that the more important books are placed on the shelves first.

We were very pleased to see the first shelf, now filled with boxes all in proper order. They will be stored here until the completion of construction for the new seminar room, at which time they will be transferred there, to allow for the renovation of the present new library, which will become the reading room.

On **Tuesday, July 21**, another shipment of many hundreds of plastic storage crates reached the monastery from Alexandria. This was followed eight days later with the arrival of storage crates that had been imported from Greece. The larger size, not available in Egypt, was necessary for the efficient packing of the many folders of letters in the monastery archive.

Following the departure of the conservators, Father Ignatios, Hemeid, Gabriel, and I packed all of the books in the new library (8). This was completed on July 27, and took 326 crates. Following this, we proceeded to pack up the reference books in the office, the New Finds, and the Archives.

On **Sunday, September 27**, the team of conservators returned to complete their work in the library. Father Daniel installed a hoist to make it easier to lower the many manuscripts (9). Hemeid cut the bubble wrap and prepared the storage crates. The manuscripts were coded, cleaned (10), wrapped, and packed into boxes, which were then strapped and sealed (11). Another team packed the early printed books that had been prepared in June. A monitoring system was used to create a database, allowing me to locate any book in its storage crate. Caroline Bendix kept everyone on track, maintained high standards, and monitored the team's progress. At the end of their work, the team posed for a group photo (12).

By **Tuesday, October 13**, the entire library had been packed, leaving empty shelves above, and the floor covered with storage crates, with their blue and red and white lids. It is a very strange sight now to see only empty shelves where there used to be manuscripts.

The archival boxes arrived late last night, **January 21**, and were unloaded first thing this morning. The first photo (13) shows the truck, which had braved the Sinai highway, many parts of which are still covered with mud and rocks from the recent downpour. But the pallet had been covered well, and everything arrived intact. Today we downloaded the temperature and humidity readings from the dataloggers. It will be interesting to see how the latest downpour registered.

The second photograph (14) shows Father Nilus at work, assembling the first box, bone folder in hand. He is using the skills he learned at Camberwell College. Father Nilus will be assigned with assembling them all, after which we will move to the second phase of the project, which is to insert the letters into the boxes, and label them correctly. We will also use the Plastazote to pack the fragile glass plates that hold the monastery's papyri.

OBITUARIES

Zaga Gavrilović
(1926-2009)

Dr Zaga Gavrilović supported the Saint Catherine Foundation from the time of its inception. We reprint here in shortened form the obituary by Dr Mary B. Cunningham, published in the Bulletin of Byzantine Studies.



Zaga Gavrilović died on 19 January 2009 after a brief illness. She was at home, surrounded by her family, and passed away peacefully. She will be missed not only by her family, but also by a wide circle of friends and colleagues who have benefited enormously from her major contributions to the field of Byzantine and Serbian Art History.

Zaga was born in Belgrade in 1926 and received her undergraduate degree in Art History from the University of Belgrade in 1949, studying Serbian medieval and Byzantine art. She worked in the Institute for the Preservation of Monuments until 1950, when she was selected to be a guide and interpreter at the large exhibition of Yugoslav art in Paris. Zaga could never toe the party line and thus sought political asylum in France.

She managed to get a grant and began her postgraduate studies under the supervision of the eminent professor of Byzantine art and iconography, André Grabar. In 1952 Zaga visited Oxford and London in order to study manuscripts in connection with her research. Here she met Aleksa Gavrilović, a political refugee like herself, whom she married in 1953. After giving birth to two daughters, Anica and Jelena, Zaga decided temporarily to abandon her scholarship and to devote herself to marriage and motherhood. The family settled in Stafford, where Aleksa worked.

The Centre for Byzantine Studies (now the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies) at the University of Birmingham was only thirty miles from

Zaga's home. It was at the University of Birmingham that I first met Zaga, when I came to England in 1977 to undertake my postgraduate studies. I remember that Zaga faithfully attended seminars in the Centre, often asking pertinent and searching questions of the speakers. She was also generous with her time and knowledge, which was huge, to postgraduate students like myself. Towards the end of the 1980s, Zaga was invited to become an Honorary Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Birmingham. This was a particularly congenial organization, conceived by the university as a way to accommodate independent scholars such as Zaga—and by that time, myself as well. Zaga enjoyed her membership of the Institute as much as she did her involvement in the CBOMGS. She was on good terms with the other Fellows and enjoyed the interdisciplinary nature of the seminars and lectures that the Institute provided.

While working on her research and participating in the academic community at the University of Birmingham between the 1970s and 2008, Zaga produced a number of important articles on aspects of medieval Serbian and Byzantine Art History. She was particularly pleased when a collection of her best articles was published as a book, entitled *Studies in Byzantine and Serbian Medieval Art*, by Pindar Press in 2001. Zaga's study of the role of women in Serbian politics, diplomacy and art at the beginning of Ottoman rule, published in Sir Steven Runciman's festschrift (2006), also provoked much interest among scholars. Zaga continued writing articles and reviews until less than a year before her final illness; nor did she cease reading and discussing scholarly issues. Zaga enjoyed close collaboration with Serbian scholars, particularly with members of the Byzantine Institute in Belgrade. In 2003 she was elected a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Zaga Gavrilović will be remembered by all who knew her as a quiet and friendly but also formidable scholar with a remarkable understanding of all aspects of Byzantine and medieval Serbian art. Her papers and articles present compelling and critical studies which often challenge received ideas about aspects of iconography or theology. Although not everyone will agree with every conclusion, all must acknowledge this as the work of a scholar who knew her material inside out and could thus make connections that will have a lasting impact on future scholarship.

MARY B. CUNNINGHAM, University of Nottingham

Professor Ihor Ševčenko
(10 February 1922 - 26 December 2009)



Ihor Ševčenko with Mr and Mrs Andreas Beroutsos at the Metropolitan Club reception organized by the American Associates in March 2005.

Ihor Ševčenko was a man of many attainments and remarkably wide learning: a Byzantinist, a Slavist, a classical scholar, a paleographer, an epigraphist, a gifted linguist, in addition to being a keen angler. Perhaps he can best be described as a cultural historian.

Born of Ukrainian parents in the village of Radość in east-central Poland, he attended the Adam Mickiewicz Classical Gymnasium in Warsaw, where he acquired a sound grounding in Greek and Latin. He continued his studies at the Charles University of Prague, winning his first doctorate (in Classical Philology) in 1945. In 1949 he was awarded his second doctorate at the University of Louvain, this time on a recondite topic of Byzantine intellectual history. His thesis, covering what was at the time new ground, was eventually published in 1962 under the title, *Études sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Choumnos*. While in Belgium he participated in the lively seminar conducted at Brussels by Henri Grégoire, the doyen of Byzantine Studies, whom he came to regard as his master.

He later moved to the United States, first to Berkeley, where he joined the circle of the eminent medievalist Ernst Kantorowicz and then taught at the Universities of Michigan and Columbia, before accepting a Chair at Harvard's Dumbarton Oaks Centre in Washington DC in 1965. There he was for a time Director of Byzantine Studies. In 1973 he transferred to Harvard itself as Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History and Literature until his retirement in 1992. He helped found in 1973 the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard,

of which he remained Associate Director until 1989. Elsewhere he lectured as Visiting Professor in Paris, Cologne, Munich, Budapest, and Bari, and held Visiting Fellowships at All Souls (1979-80) and Wolfson College (1987, 1993) of Oxford University.

Ševčenko's bibliography as of 2003 lists over 200 titles, starting with a Ukrainian translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1947). Many of his articles have been collected in four volumes devoted in large part to two broad subjects: the intellectual history of Byzantium and its impact on the eastern Slavs. In the latter field he maintained the view that Byzantine influence in religion, political ideology and letters remained paramount down to the spread of European Enlightenment in the seventeenth/eighteenth century, a view that brought him into conflict with Soviet historians who argued for an autochthonous Russian culture with only a thin Byzantine veneer. In his latter years he had been paying increasing attention to the troubled history of Ukraine as a battleground between Roman Catholic and Orthodox ideologies.

Ševčenko himself described his approach as representing what he called 'normal science' (meaning Wissenschaft) based on a close study of texts and their mutual interdependence. One example of his method will suffice, namely his spectacular demolition of the so-called *Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus*. This enigmatic Greek text, first published in 1819 by the noted Hellenist K.B. Hase and purporting to narrate the experiences of a Byzantine commander faced by unspecified barbarians somewhere on the north coast of the Black Sea had provoked a plethora

of conflicting interpretations not free from national bias. Ševčenko was led to the conclusion (since confirmed) that the *Fragments* were an elaborate hoax perpetrated by Hase himself at the expense of his Russian paymasters. A more erudite and humorous piece of literary detection would be hard to find, but, predictably, not everyone was pleased.

As happens to most perfectionists, Ševčenko did not live to complete all the projects he had in mind, but his critical edition of the highly important *Life of the Byzantine Emperor Basil I (867-886)* ascribed to Constantine Porphyrogenitus is ready for the printer and promises to become a model of its kind.

Ševčenko received many distinctions, including three honorary doctorates and two *Festschriften* on his sixtieth and eightieth birthdays, respectively. He was a member of a dozen academies, including the British Academy (Corresponding Fellow) and was from 1986 to 1996 President of the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines, in which capacity he presided over the memorable international congress held at Moscow (1991), which happened to coincide with the coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev.

In 2000 Ševčenko joined the board of the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation. He participated in the White Nights Weekend in St. Petersburg that year and the gala opening of the 'Sinai Byzantium Russia' exhibition at the Hermitage. He attended the Saint Catherine Foundation gala at the Metropolitan for the 'Byzantium: Faith and Power' exhibition in 2004 and never missed a board meeting in New York.

A man of commanding presence and outgoing personality, Ševčenko had a wide circle of friends both in Europe and America with whom he communicated in French, German, Italian, Russian, Polish, modern Greek and occasionally Latin. He made high demands on his graduate students, but obtained excellent results from the few that satisfied his expectations.

PROF. CYRIL MANGO, Exeter College, Oxford



Ihor Ševčenko and fellow Directors of the American Associates at the annual Board meeting in 2005.

EVENTS

ATHENS

AN EVENING AT MILOS. ESTIATORIO MILOS 19 OCTOBER 2009

The American Associates organized two very successful events during the past year, the first of which was a dinner at Milos restaurant at the Hilton, Athens in the presence of His Eminence Damianos, Archbishop of Sinai. HRH Crown Princess Katherine of Serbia welcomed the guests, who enjoyed a talk by Professor H el ene Ahrweiler on the importance of the Monastery to our understanding of Byzantine culture. Dimitris Dondos gave an update on the conservation work at the Saint Catherine's Library.



Mrs Maria Doxiadis, Mrs Olga Karatza and Mrs Kadio Lambropoulou



Mr Vaggelis Chronis, Professor H el ene Ahrweiler, His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai and Mrs Henrietta Latsis

LONDON

DINNER AT HALEPI, ST CATHERINE'S DAY 25 NOVEMBER 2009

St Catherine's Day was celebrated with an informal dinner at Halepi, the popular Greek taverna in Bayswater, London. Guests enjoyed lively conversation and the delicious mezes and grilled specialities for which Halepi is well known. The dinner concluded with an ad hoc presentation about the conservation work by Andrew Honey from the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Dr Athanasios Velios, research fellow from the Ligatus Research Unit at Camberwell College of Art-University of the Arts London.

They showed a prototype of the stainless steel box designed to house part of the manuscript collection at the Monastery. A new approach to the safe housing of manuscripts, the box has been designed by the project team in collaboration with Conservation by Design and PSJ Fabrications Ltd. Athanasios went on to explain the computer programme that the team will use to arrange the boxes within the library, maximising the limited space and sorting the boxes by size.



Mr Andrew Honey with the prototype of the stainless steel box



Mr Alexander Kedros, Mr Dimitris Dondos and Mr Tryphon Kedros

NEW YORK

AN EVENING AT MILOS. ESTIATORIO MILOS

12 NOVEMBER 2009

The original Milos in New York provided the setting for another fundraising dinner on 12 November 2009. Dr Helen Evans, Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at the Metropolitan Museum, gave a lecture on the historical and cultural significance of the Saint Catherine's Library. Author Janet Soskice presented her book *Sisters of Sinai* (a review of which appears on page 3), and the Very Revd Father Justin spoke briefly about the challenges of moving the books at Saint Catherine's in anticipation of the building work. A prototype of one of the stainless steel storage boxes that will be used to store the manuscripts in the new library was shown to the guests, a number of whom generously purchased boxes for the conservation project.

Both the Athens and New York dinners were kindly sponsored by Kostas Spiliadis of Estiatorio Milos, which means that the considerable proceeds went towards the work of the Foundation.



HRH Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia and Sir Ronald Grierson



Mrs Popi Kotsonis (left background), Mrs Maria Long, Mrs Maria Lyras, Mrs Fofo Bookis, Mrs Mary Jaharis and Mrs Froso Beys



The guests listen attentively to the after dinner talk delivered by Dr Helen Evans.

GENEVA

ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION SUISSE DES AMIS DE LA FONDATION SAINTE-CATHERINE

The Swiss Friends of the Saint Catherine Foundation organised an interesting programme of events in 2009.

The University of Geneva was the venue for a talk by Prof. Jean-Michel Mouton of the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in Paris, on 9 March. *Le Sultan, les moines et les bédouins: le monastère Sainte-Catherine du Sinai et les musulmans au Moyen Âge* examined the interaction between Islam and Christianity in medieval Sinai. Prof. Mouton illuminated a topic that remains relevant to the Sinai of today, home of three great religions. His lecture inspired lively discussion at the fundraising dinner that followed, held at the *Cercle de la Terrasse*.

The *Assemblée générale* of the Swiss association was held at the *Fondation Martin Bodmer* in Cologny on 13 May. Following a review of the previous year's activities, the members were invited to a preview of the current exhibition at the Bodmer Museum, *Trésors du siècle d'or russe, de Pouchkine à Tolstoï*. Of particular interest were the illustrated manuscripts of the Old Believers from the Pushkin House in Saint Petersburg. On display for the first time, these manuscripts bear witness to the strength of the Orthodox faith in northern Russia during the nineteenth century. After the preview, many of the members gathered at the *Auberge du Lion d'Or* nearby for a congenial dinner in the bistro.

Saint Catherine's Day was the occasion for a private view of the exhibition *Orient-Occident. Racines spirituelles de l'Europe*, also at the Bodmer Museum. Prof. Charles Méla, President of the Swiss association and Director of the Bodmer Foundation, personally guided members around the exhibition. The evening concluded with a dinner at the bistro of the *Auberge du Lion d'Or*, a long-standing favourite of the members.

The Swiss Friends brought out two publications in 2009: *Le Sultan, les moines et les bédouins: le monastère Sainte-Catherine du Sinai et les musulmans au Moyen Âge*, by Jean-Michel Mouton, (*Cahiers de l'Association suisse, numéro 5*) and *Les peintures de la crypte Sainte-Catherine en l'église Sainte-Marie de Montmorillon*, by Yves Christe (*Cahiers de l'Association suisse, numéro 6*).



Professor Jean-Michel Mouton's lecture at the University of Geneva on 9 March 2009.

THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW FRAGMENT FROM THE CODEx SINAITICUS

NIKOLAS SARRIS

In April 2009, during work for my PhD research on the bindings from the Saint Catherine's manuscript collection,¹ I came across a photograph taken six years earlier by a member of the Camberwell - Saint Catherine's (now Ligatus) Library Conservation Project team. The photograph was of the inner face of the right board of Sinai Greek 2289 (see page 1), a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century book in an eighteenth-century binding. Showing through the pastedown of the binding was a fragment of the oldest and most famous manuscript at Saint Catherine's and one of the most important Christian books, the Codex Sinaiticus.

My research involved the careful examination of several bindings and, for this binding in particular, a detailed study of its structure, date and style. According to my investigations—using the records collected during the condition survey of the monastery's manuscripts—Sinai Greek 2289 belongs to a group of 18 manuscripts and three printed books that appear to have been bound at the monastery at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by the same workshop.

The paper pastedown on the right board of Sinai Greek 2289 is partly torn, detached, no doubt, by a previous reader or examiner who failed to notice the importance of what he had exposed. The lacuna created by the tear revealed a layer of parchment with manuscript writing that was not very well preserved. The act of detaching the pastedown had not only created the tear but had also removed some of the ink. The manuscript waste was adhered to the binding board as board lining, and it seems that the turn-ins of the leather cover are pasted over the manuscript. This would suggest that the manuscript waste was used as an integral part of the binding.

The writing on the fragment is in Greek uncial, and the exposed area is sufficiently large to show that the script is arranged in a narrow column with 13 to 15 letters per line. Uncial Greek writing was replaced by minuscule script from the ninth century onwards, so the manuscript underneath is clearly very early, while the narrow column itself is very rare. The majority of early Greek manuscripts known to us are written in one, or occasionally two, columns that, according to the size of the parchment folio, contain 20 to 30 characters per line. The Codex Vaticanus, written in three narrow columns with 17 to 18 letters per line, is a notable exception. Few manuscripts have narrower columns.

The manuscript that best matches the fragment is the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete copy of the New Testament to survive. Was the fragment I had discovered indisputably from the Codex Sinaiticus? The number of letters per line, and the height and width of the letters, match perfectly. The style of the writing is identical, too, pending confirmation by specialist palaeographers. The fragment displays yet another characteristic of the Codex

Sinaiticus, the use of horizontal and vertical rules to align the letters. Most chapters of the codex have double-spaced rules for every other line of writing, as does the fragment. What is more, the distance between the two lines is the same, as is the distance between the two vertical rules.

The Saint Catherine's librarian, Father Justin, inspected Sinai Greek 2289 soon after the photograph of the binding caught my attention. He not only confirmed my initial speculations—the fragment is indeed from the Codex Sinaiticus—but he was able to identify the passage to which it belongs, Joshua, chapter one, verse ten: Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.

How, one wonders, did a fragment of such an important manuscript become part of a bookbinding? Manuscript fragments were often used in bindings. Parchment, in particular, a rare and expensive material, served perfectly as a strong and flexible component of bookbinding. It is not uncommon to see fragmented parchment folia re-used in covers, endleaves, and spine or board linings. In a remote location like the Sinai desert, it is not surprising that discarded parchment was recycled, even a fragment from the Codex Sinaiticus. It is likely that a folio became detached from the manuscript and was kept together with other individual waste leaves of parchment for use by binders at the monastery. It is interesting to note that some of the fragments of the Codex discovered at the monastery in 1975 belong to Joshua, chapters twelve and thirteen, only a few folia after the new fragment. Perhaps this fragment, too, would have been found with the others, had it not been used as bookbinding material.

A challenging task awaits conservators, who will need to find a way to expose more of the fragment without damaging its very friable ink or the historic binding of which it is part. This task poses serious ethical and practical dilemmas that require careful consideration. What is the best way to reveal the fragment and examine the binding and the manuscript in which it is found? Whatever the course of action, an appropriate conservation studio and conservation equipment will be needed, with the support of imaging technology. The prospect of finding more hidden fragments of the Codex Sinaiticus in the left board of Greek 2289, as well as in the 20 other bindings made by the same workshop, suggests that further research is required.

1. Nikolas Sarris, 'Classification of Finishing Tools in Byzantine/ Greek Bookbinding: Establishing Links for Manuscripts from the Library of St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt', doctoral thesis funded by the AHRC and submitted to Camberwell College of Art-University of the Arts London in February 2010.

NIKOLAS SARRIS is supervisor of the book conservation workshop at the Monastery of St John in Patmos, Greece and a member of the Saint Catherine's Library Project team. He is completing his PhD thesis on the decorated bookbindings at Saint Catherine's.

IHOR ŠEVČENKO ON SINAI

CYRIL MANGO



Ihor Ševčenko measuring an inscription of the Byzantine emperor John Palaeologos dated 1441 in the Land Walls of Constantinople.

Ihor Ševčenko (see Obituary on p. 8) paid two working visits to Saint Catherine's Monastery, in 1960 and 1961, as a member of the Alexandria-Michigan-Princeton Expedition. Among his many fields of scholarly interest, Byzantine manuscripts and inscriptions occupied a prominent place (see above). He was also an expert on Church Slavonic literature. On Sinai his main objective was the recording of Greek inscriptions. In all, he found and published 16 dating to the earliest period of the monastery's existence, i.e. from the reign of Justinian (527-565) until the Arab conquest (ca. 640), of which five had not been known before.¹ The importance of the inscriptions lies in the fact that they provide the only evidence for a relatively close dating of the monastery buildings. Those on the wooden ceiling beams of the basilical church specify that it was put up after the death of the Empress Theodora and before that of Justinian, i.e. between 548 and 565, while the inscription in the apse informs us that the mosaic was made under an abbot named Longinus (unfortunately unknown) in indiction 14,² i.e. 550/51, 565/6 or later. As to the date of 527 displayed in the inscription immured above the present entrance of the monastery, Ševčenko was able to show beyond reasonable doubt that it was a fabrication

of the late eighteenth century. The inscription in the apse yields another bit of information that has not been generally understood, namely that the mosaic was financed by individual donors and was not, therefore, an imperial commission.

As a speaker of modern Greek and a member of the Orthodox Church, Ševčenko was able to gain the confidence of the monastic community, thanks to which he chanced on an unexpected discovery that was far removed from the objective of his mission. The oikonomos Nikephoros passed on to him a sheet of paper which turned out to be the receipt in Tischendorf's own hand, dated 28 September 1859, for the loan of the Codex Sinaiticus. This receipt, which had previously been presumed lost, made it quite clear that Tischendorf undertook to return the manuscript if so requested by the monastery. In other words, there was no question at the time of its being presented as a gift to the Czar of Russia as it was by Tischendorf in 1862. Searching through a pile of papers contained in a chest in the new library, Ševčenko came across another five documents relating to the same affair, namely correspondence between Tischendorf and Kyrillos, archbishop of Sinai, who continued to insist on

the monastery's ownership of the manuscript. Thanks to this new evidence the 'Sinaiticus question' appears in all its contemporary complexity, involving the rift between Kyrillos, unjustly accused of alienating sacred property, and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the role of two successive Russian ambassadors to the Porte, Prince Lobanov and Count Ignat'ev, whose help was solicited to counter the confiscation of Sinaitic properties in Romania, and Tischendorf himself, who was caught in a power game he could not control. Anyone interested in the pros and cons of this murky affair is advised to consult Ševčenko's judicious and exhaustively documented study, which appeared in 1964.³

Ševčenko was not on hand when the 'New Finds' were made in 1975, but in 1979 he was shown two photographs of a Slavonic manuscript in the Glagolitic script⁴ discovered on Sinai and these immediately aroused his curiosity. He had no difficulty in identifying the new fragments as belonging to the famous Euchologium Sinaiticum (see below), one of the earliest Slavonic manuscripts in existence, and went on to point out the close resemblance in ornamentation and decorated initials between Glagolitic and Italo-Greek manuscripts of the tenth to twelfth centuries.⁵ The full publication of the Slavonic 'New Finds' by I.C. Tarnanidis (1988) has naturally provided additional information not previously available but has not affected Ševčenko's fundamental statements. The latter's acute

observations on the cultural connections between the newly converted Slavs of the Balkans and Greeks in Italy, rather than Constantinople, retain their full value.

1. "The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in the Light of its Inscriptions", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20 (1966), 255-264. See also (with K. Weitzmann), "The Moses Cross at Sinai", *DOP*, 17 (1963), 391-398.
2. The indiction was a tax cycle of 15 years, starting in AD 312, often used for dating. A date such as indiction 14 means the 14th year in any given cycle of 15 years. The indictional year was counted from September 1, a day still commemorated by the Greek Church.
3. "New Documents on Constantine Tischendorf and the Codex Sinaiticus", *Scriptorium*, 18/1 (1964), 55-80; repr. by Institute on East Central European School of International Affairs / Columbia University.
4. The earliest form of Church Slavonic alphabet, probably invented in the ninth century, it was superseded by the Cyrillic, still in use today.
5. "Report on the Glagolitic Fragments ... discovered on Sinai...", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 6/2 (1982), 121-147.

PROFESSOR CYRIL MANGO is Bywater and Sotheby Professor Emeritus of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature, University of Oxford.



Library of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Slavonic MS 37, the Euchologium Sinaiticum, written in Glagolitic letters, eleventh century.

LIVING HISTORY: PRESERVING THE LIBRARY OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CATHERINE AT SINAI

HELEN C. EVANS

Dr Helen Evans gave this talk at the Saint Catherine Foundation fundraising dinner at Estiatorio Milos in New York on November 12, 2009.

We wish to welcome you tonight to an evening celebrating the library of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, a site where we can touch, read, care for and learn from examples of Christian writings that span the age of the Monastery, one of the oldest in the world. When you are at the Monastery, seeing the age of its walls, the even more ancient surrounding mountains where Moses stood, where St. Catherine was buried, where monks and saints lived and died, you are filled with amazement and awe for a truly ancient past. At moments it is as if you are walking amidst other times.

The Saint Catherine Foundation has been instrumental in supporting the Holy Monastery's library since the Foundation's founding in 1996. That was the year that I first went to the Holy Monastery with Dr. Mahrukh Tarapor as representatives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, an event that has had its own effect on the Holy Monastery's history, as I will discuss in a few moments. But first to return to the first presence of written words at the Holy Monastery – that is, of course, the words written on the tablets of the law given to Moses at the Holy Site. It is most appropriate that we support the library where words have always had pride of place. The tablets survive today only in a monumental mosaic on the walls of the Monastery's church and on icons at the site.

The first reference to written books is found in the earliest surviving record of a pilgrim to the Holy Monastery. Egeria, a Spanish lady of the late fourth century, describes reading from books at the sacred sites she visits, where events in the life of Moses, Aaron and Elijah occurred, and at the Burning Bush. From her text, it would appear that the book she read belonged to her, but surely the monks at the site had gospels and bibles for their use too by that date. A text in Aramaic is one work that could have been at the Monastery before the Lady Egeria's visit.

Another is the monumentally handsome Codex Sinaiticus, which was written in the decades before Egeria's visit. It probably came to the Monastery in the sixth century, in the era when the Byzantine Emperor Justinian had the site fortified and a handsome church built within the compound, which had to be provided with liturgical furnishings including texts. The survival of the Codex Sinaiticus at the Monastery until its removal by Tischendorf in the nineteenth century can be seen as evidence of the site's protection of its texts, the job of a library, over the centuries.

By the time the site was fortified, Christian pilgrims and monks speaking many languages were coming to the Monastery. Researchers have found written evidence of

Constantinopolitans, Romans, Cypriots, Armenians, Iberians, Isaurians, Meseans and even Saracen pilgrims or visitors. As services for many of these Christian communities could be held in the side chapels of the great church, manuscripts necessary for the services must have been accessible, a potential library. In the library today, the presence of these people is recorded in the varied texts that survive in, among other languages, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic, and Latin.

By the seventh century, the monks at the Monastery were writing their own important texts. These manuscripts reflect the intellectually vibrant and intensely religious life that must have existed there among certain of the monks. John Klimax, a monk at the Monastery who would become its abbot, wrote *The Heavenly Ladder*, or *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. He wrote it at the request of Abbot John of the nearby Monastery at Raithou, who in petitioning for the text described John Klimax as a second Moses leading his people, the monks. Klimax's description of how monks should live their lives is an exceptionally important book that has been influential throughout the Orthodox world over many centuries. You may be less aware that Arabic was among the many languages into which it was copied, as a seventeenth-century copy of the text in the Monastery's library today proves. Soon after John Klimax's death around 650, a monk, Daniel of Raithou, would write all that we know of the saint's life. Today we find Raithou in the title of the Monastery's abbot – His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, Faran, and Raithou, Abbot of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

The scholarly tradition of writing on the lives of saints continues at the Monastery today, as Father Justin has recently published his translation of the life of St. Catherine. The presence of the saint's relics at the site drew increasing numbers of pilgrims during the middle ages from throughout the Christian world. Many from Europe followed maps that survive showing the way to the site. Most sought relics. Some of the works that left Sinai would have powerful impacts on western imagery. One example of this desire for works associated with St. Catherine is an image of the Virgin and Child at the Metropolitan Museum. The delicate miniature mosaic was made about 1300. By the sixteenth century it was argued to be the fourth-century image that St. Catherine viewed which led to her conversion to Christianity. We know this from an inscription on its back in Latin in a sixteenth-century hand: "A small painting belonging to the Holy hermit Alexandrinus which he gave to the Holy Virgin Catherine, initiating her into her Christianity; in the presence of which she acknowledged Christ, the only begotten son of God the Father." The text follows her vita, life, which tells that she saw an intimate image of the infant Christ who turned away from her and that inspired her to become a Christian, but the mosaic is 1,000 years too late to be that image.

This desire for confirming the authenticity of the past, even when inaccurate as in the legend of the mosaic, is related to new phenomena of the Renaissance – an interest in reviving and identifying the past. In later centuries scholars would begin to come to the Monastery to confirm

its history and the history of Christianity as it survives within its walls. The books of the Monastery were most important for this task. Among the first generation of scholars to seek history within the Monastery's walls were the Russians. The monastery had assumed a special importance in that land in the eighteenth century, when Catherine the Great had associated herself with St. Catherine to endear herself to her Orthodox subjects. The connection would grow as the Russians became the protectors of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire.

Soon Russian scholars would seek to take home for study works they found at Sinai. Tischendorf would take the Codex Sinaiticus from the Monastery in 1843. The Russian Archbishop Ouspensky would return from Sinai to Kyiv with early icons. More appropriately, Kondakoff would go to Sinai to study the manuscripts there and then would publish his findings rather than taking books. This generation of Russian scholarship at Sinai was to have a profound impact on the first generation of modern Byzantine studies. The first Byzantine exhibition was held in 1906 at the Catholic Byzantine Rite Monastery of Grottaferrata in Italy. Its organizer openly acknowledged his debt to the Russian scholars like Kondakoff and Ouspensky and extensively illuminated manuscripts from Sinai in the catalogue.

After the First World War, a new generation of scholars sought out the Monastery. In 1921 Lina Eckenstein would publish "A History of Sinai" offering a detailed history of the Monastery while ending with an expression of worry about its fate in the immediate post World War I years as the Ottoman Empire, long ruler of the region, was failing and cars were making the site more easily accessible. The aftermath of World War II brought more scholar/pilgrims to the Monastery worried about its future and the great manuscripts it contained. In America interest was encouraged not only by scholars but also by such institutions as the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. In 1954 it published a book *Cradle of our Faith, the Holy Land, Where lies the Common Heritage binding us together in the Brotherhood of Man*. The pages on the Holy Monastery describe in brief its history and note that all the major manuscripts were microfilmed in 1949 "to make them available to the world of biblical scholarship." Those microfilms, while no longer of exceptional quality, are still accessible at the Library of Congress. It was soon after the microfilming project in 1951 that the Monastery's current library was installed.

In 1956 Greek scholars would have a major impact on our appreciation of the Monastery, when the Soterious published the first comprehensive survey of the major icons there. At much the same time a team of universities organized by George Forsyth of the University of Michigan made what must have been the first heavily publicized scholarly pilgrimage to Sinai. A series of trips organized by the University of Michigan in conjunction with Princeton University and the University of Alexandria surveyed aspects of the monastery's buildings, library and works of art. The cumulative efforts of the expeditions were

immortalized in the *National Geographic Magazine* of January, 1964, a publication that aroused immense interest in the site.

In the mid 1990's two events occurred that have had a lasting impact on the history of the Monastery. At that time, Archbishop Damianos and the Fathers approved sending objects on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art for my exhibition "The Glory of Byzantium." This was the first time in the Monastery's history that it had approved sending works beyond its walls. The intensity of the public response to the exhibition has led the Fathers to approve loans to other exhibitions in St. Petersburg, London, Athens, Martigny, and Los Angeles, all of which have encouraged recognition of the importance of preserving the Monastery's collections.

Immediately before the Museum sought loans from the Monastery, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales spent time at the Monastery and became aware of its needs. The Saint Catherine Foundation is the result of his interest. We tonight at this event are part of the effort he initiated to preserve the Monastery's library. I wish to close by encouraging you to look at the prototype for the stainless steel boxes which the library needs to house its manuscripts. These containers will protect the works while allowing each generation of scholars to study the works in increasing detail. Technology today allows us to have access to works that we could never have had in the past. The Monastery wishes to have its works well preserved for each generation. Due to your support tonight that will be increasingly possible.

Thank you!

DR. HELEN C. EVANS is Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

MOVING THE LIBRARY AT SAINT CATHERINE'S: THE BARCODE TRACKING SYSTEM

ATHANASIOS VELIOS AND CAROLINE BENDIX

The library at Saint Catherine's comprises some 3,300 bound manuscripts, 15,000 early printed books and 9,000 modern books; an archive of 1,000 books, files, scrolls and folders; and approximately 650 New Finds, the cache of manuscript leaves and fragments discovered at the monastery in 1975. Much of this material is unique and some of it has not been catalogued, so an important element of the packing and moving plan was the security of every item. We had to take into consideration the likelihood that some of the material, especially the bound manuscripts and New Finds, would be required for consultation during the building works; the method chosen should therefore allow for easy tracking and access.

Barcoding technology is used widely for data inputting. Essentially a keyboard replacement, it allows for the quick and error-free inputting of data and has been well tested in a wide range of applications, from supermarket checkouts to courier services. On the 50th anniversary of the invention of the barcode, the teams of conservators packing up the library found themselves using this proven technology to speed up their work.

Each item in the library was given a barcode containing its shelfmark. Scanning the barcode brings up the shelfmark on the computer screen instantly, saving considerable time. The barcodes were prepared in advance: each barcode was printed on two slips of paper, one for insertion in the book, manuscript or folder, and the other for display on its protective packaging. As each book or manuscript was removed from the shelves, the barcode slips were placed inside so as not to be lost during cleaning. Before wrapping, one slip was folded in half with the barcode facing inwards, to avoid contact with the textblock. The folded slip was placed inside the left (upper) board and the second slip was attached to the tissue paper or bubble wrap. The wrapped books and manuscripts were placed in crates, which were numbered and barcoded in turn, facilitating the identification of the contents. The layout of the crates was then mapped, enabling Father Justin to find any item in the library without delay.

As with all Ligatus activities, the barcode project was developed using mostly open-source software, ensuring long-term support and the accessibility of the collected data. Three software systems were used:

Software to produce the barcodes

An excellent open-source project called barcode4j (<http://barcode4j.sourceforge.net/>) offers tools for the mass production of barcodes. Lists of shelfmarks and crates were produced after consultation with Father Justin. These lists were automatically fed to barcode4j using the so-called 'command line script', which produced image files of the

barcodes in JPEG format. These were printed on self-adhesive labels after transfer to a text file in ODF (Open Document Format). The manual insertion of a few thousand images of barcodes in the label document template would have been an impossible task. However, the specification for ODF is freely available and allows easy direct editing of a file without time-consuming manual procedures. The ODF document was prepared automatically through a script that inserted thousands of barcodes in the label template ready to be printed.



The barcode for one of the early printed books, Greek 0010.

Software to run the tracking database and inputting form

In our consideration of the features required for the Saint Catherine's system, we took into account both the fact that different teams would need to input data simultaneously and the possibility that Father Justin (and Father Ignatios, who helped test the system) would require access to the records as they were being collected. Instead of attempting to produce specific applications for the different computers and operating systems accessing the database, we opted for a centralised solution of the database running on a server in Father Justin's office and a web-form through which data can be inputted. For the database server, we used the open-source industry standard MySQL, which is well known for good support and reliability. The web-form was produced using 'php', a popular open-source programming language for websites. This combination allows great flexibility and ease of access, although in the case of Saint Catherine's, access is controlled through secure password protection.

Software to access the database from the terminal

Since the database was accessible through the use of a web-form, our inputting terminals were equipped with standard web-browser software, which enabled us to undertake the inputting tasks.

The above combination of web-server and web-browser architecture is standard for Internet connections, and it would have been possible to have the web-server in London and connect to it over the Internet from the Monastery. However, the unreliable and slow Internet connection currently available in Sinai made such an arrangement too risky, and instead we decided to run the server from Father Justin's office, so that the terminals could connect to it through a local wireless network that would not be affected by unexpected interruptions of the Internet connection.

The Internet connection proved particularly useful for backup, though. Unlike the previous work on the Printed Books survey, where digital images comprised the bulk of the data, the tracking records are text-based and, by comparison, very small in size. The web-server was



The wireless barcode readers chosen for the Saint Catherine's Library Project stood up to long hours of use.

programmed to email a backup of the database to London every hour, with the transmission time being insignificant.

As for all projects at the Monastery, the remote location and the dry and dusty conditions of the desert are important factors in the choice of equipment. Reliability is a key issue, and our concern during the packing programme was to make sure that there would be no delays due to equipment failure. At the same time, we would need a terminal that would not require any worktop space and would be simple to operate. Worktop space is precious when hundreds of books are being packed daily, as equipment should not interfere with the handling of books. Small wireless barcode readers have been developed for a range of applications, and there is a reasonable choice of manufacturers producing a variety of robust models able to withstand unfriendly environmental conditions and continuous use. Our terminal of choice was the Motorola MC55 Enterprise Digital Assistant, which is able to run a web-browser.

Industry standard equipment was chosen for the server running the database and the web-form. The Lenovo X41 laptop, one of the laptops used for the Printed Books survey, was ideal to handle the tracking records inserted by the various packing teams, as well as the review and editing of these records by Father Justin and Father Ignatios. It is worth mentioning that the server software was based on the open-source Linux operating system.

The database is currently held both on the web-server in the Monastery for Father Justin's direct use and on the Ligatus website, where it is accessible with password protection for further administration. The use of standard and open-source software allows the integration of the database in a number of different ways, and we hope that this system will eventually be extended once the Boxing programme has been implemented, to permit the retrieval of the books in the new shelving system, since they will be ordered by size rather than shelfmark.

DR ATHANASIOS VELIOS is a Research Fellow at Ligatus, University of the Arts London, where he primarily works on the digital documentation of library and archival material for conservation.

CAROLINE BENDIX is an independent accredited library conservator, working in a large range of historic libraries. She is the libraries conservation adviser to the National Trust and specialises in all aspects of the care of books in their own environment.

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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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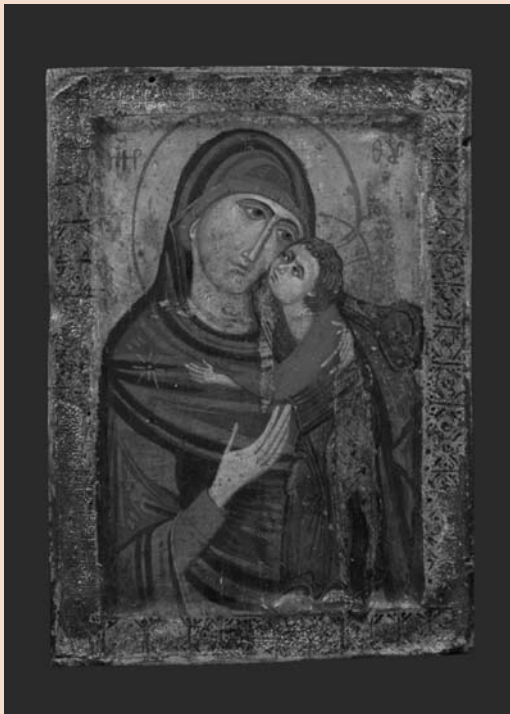
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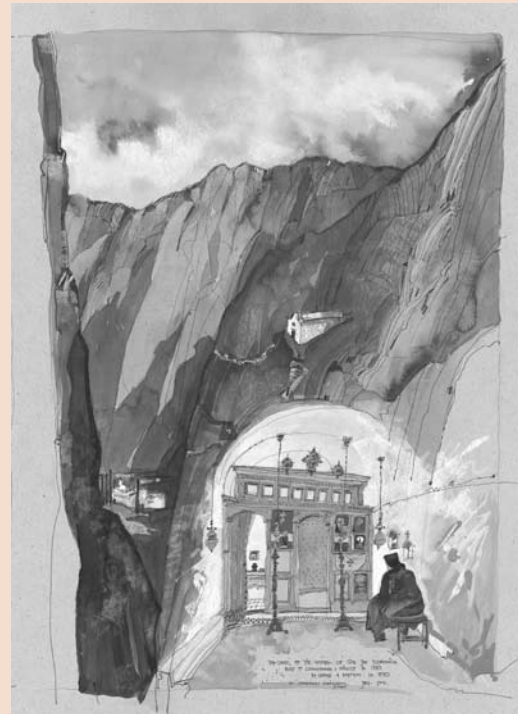
CHRISTMAS CARDS 2010

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The Virgin Glykophilousa
13th century, tempera and gold on wood
Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai



The Chapel of the Mother of God Economisa at Saint Catherine's
Watercolour, Doug Patterson, 2002

Actual size not shown
Both cards measure a generous 14.8 by 21 centimetres
(5.8 by 8.3 inches)

The Saint Catherine Foundation charity Christmas cards for 2010 feature an icon from the important Saint Catherine's Monastery collection and an illustration from Doug Patterson's Saint Catherine's Portfolio. The cards are produced on heavy semi-gloss paper with a matt interior writing surface. The matching envelopes have a gummed flap.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the EFG Group, all proceeds from Christmas card sales benefit the Saint Catherine Foundation and its work.

Printing costs have been met by the