

Sinaiticus

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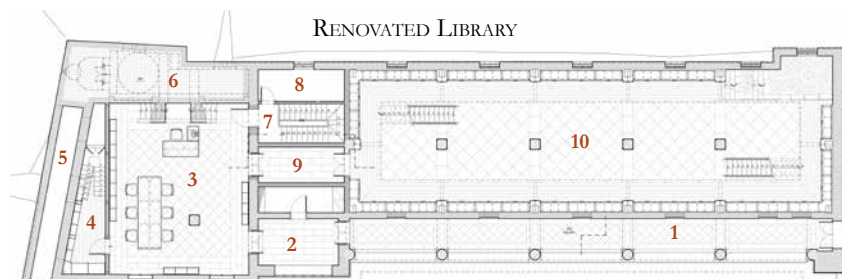
SINAI'S NEW LIBRARY OPENS

After nine years in storage, the priceless manuscripts and books of Saint Catherine's have been returned to the second floor of the South Range, transforming the reconfigured rooms into a working library.

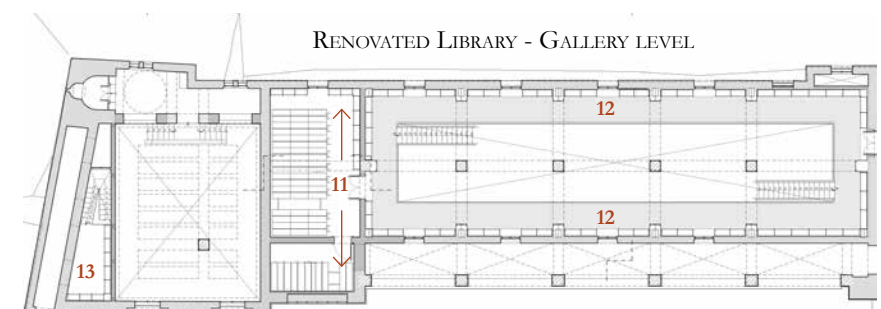
Entry to the main library is through two air-lock doors (2 and 9), each of which consists of a pair of doors linked by a short passage. This makes it possible to close one door before opening the other, protecting the books from the external air and, above all, the pervasive and highly abrasive dust of the Sinai. The first door, at the **main entrance** (2), leads into the **reading room** (3). The second door (9) links the reading room to the **main library** (10), where most of the books are housed. There are enclosed racks at the lower level for the horizontal storage of the boxed early manuscripts and open shelving on the **gallery** (12) for the early printed books. The open shelves are provided with removable metal fences to stop the books sliding off in the event of an earthquake. The wooden doors enclosing the racks and trays perform the same function, while providing an extra element of security.

Adjacent to the main library, at gallery level, are two rooms with rolling stacks for the historic archive, New Finds and remaining printed books (11). There is also fixed shelving for the extensive collection of scrolls. These rooms are situated over the **librarian's office** (8), **emergency stairs** (7) and the air-lock door between the reading room and main library (9).

Particular attention has been paid to the inclusion of passive control technology to maintain even temperature and relative humidity levels in the



1 Colonnade 2 Main entrance 3 Reading room 4 Book storage 5 Fortress wall
6 Chapel 7 Emergency stairs 8 Librarian's office 9 Entrance to main library 10 Main library.



11 Storage (historic archive, New Finds, early printed books) 12 Gallery (early printed books)
13 Book storage.



rooms where the books are kept. The walls are lined with cellular concrete blocks, which act as a humidity buffer, and the windows at the lower level have been covered. The concrete slab roof has added insulation, as well as an overlay of pale-coloured tiles, reducing significantly the transfer of heat into and out of the library.

The expansive new **reading room (3)** pictured above is designed to be a comfortable place to work. Air-conditioned in summer, it has underfloor heating for the winter, with large upholstered chairs, cherry wood tables and good lighting. More importantly, it provides the right conditions for the safe handling of the historic collections by researchers – in full view of the librarian's desk. The reading room is fitted with open shelving to house the growing number of reference books that any reading room for such a collection needs. A triangular space against the western **fortress wall (5)** provides additional **storage** on two levels (**4** and **13**). The sixth-century **chapel (6)** here is visible once again, and its 15th-century fresco of the Prophet Aaron is newly conserved (in memory of Charlie Manley, 2013).

A final accounting of the cost of renovation can now be made. The initial budget for the work was €2,558,622. Thanks to the careful sourcing of materials and selection of contractors, this figure was revised downwards to €1,893,380. The final cost was lower still, €1,820,000, even though items not previously budgeted were included, such as pressurised inert gas storage vessels for fire suppression, the system of racks and trays in the main library and the fire barriers on the ceilings below the library.

The foundation expresses special thanks to the friends and members around the world who contributed to the renovation effort. Your support has made the new library a reality.

FATHER JUSTIN: LIBRARY UPDATE

There are two adjoining rooms that open at the balcony level of the newly renovated library, for the storage of the archives and the New Finds. These rooms were the first to be completed, and so the packing cases containing these manuscripts were the first to be brought out of storage. Both rooms have rolling stacks for compact storage, to

make the most efficient use of the space. It did not take us long to have all of these items on the new shelves.

The floor level of the main library storeroom has 33 cabinets, ranged around the room on all four sides. The cabinets are made of cherry wood, with stainless steel grilles. These enclose the trays that will hold the stainless steel boxes for the oldest and most significant manuscripts, and for a few early printed books of exceptional importance. The manuscripts are no longer in numerical order, but are classified by size, so that all of the boxes in each vertical column can be of the same width and depth.

We followed a spreadsheet to know where to place each manuscript. The manuscripts that do not need boxes have been stored in the archive. It was a joy to see the manuscripts emerge from storage, and take their place in the new library. After this, we began to place the early Greek printed books on the balcony shelves. We had the first thousand books in place for the inauguration of the library in December. Since then, we have continued our work with the early Greek printed books. We will have the last of the shelves filled within the next few weeks.

Two conservators, Marco di Bella and Irene Zanella, both of whom worked on the Ligatus survey of the manuscripts, will double-check the dimensions of the manuscripts. We will then be able to proceed with confidence to the manufacture of the stainless steel boxes. The enclosure of the most important manuscripts and early printed books in protective boxes will bring the renovation of the library close to completion, leaving only the protection of selected books on the open shelves and in the mezzanine storage with acid-free card wrappers and bookshoes (see 'Ligatus News' opposite).

Visitors have praised the newly renovated library for its great beauty. But it is also clear that a great deal of thought was given to how the library would function. Already we have had visiting scholars with ambitious lists of manuscripts they would like to consult, and we have seen that such requests

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 Designed by Emilia López (www.emilialopez.com)
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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.

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can easily be accommodated. We are grateful to the Saint Catherine Foundation for their support of the Condition Assessment Survey, which allowed the planning of the manuscript boxing programme with great precision.

FATHER JUSTIN SINAITES



BOXING PROJECT ADVANCES

The project to provide individual boxed protection for some 2,187 of the monastery's bound manuscripts is advancing rapidly. The supporting system of racking and trays is now in place within the renovated library, and the manuscripts have been set out on their separate trays, awaiting the fabrication of the boxes (as illustrated above). For the time being, most of the manuscripts and books remain in the acid-free tissue paper and bubble wrap that have protected them since their removal from the library in 2009. However, when Father Justin opens a manuscript for a scholar, he leaves it unwrapped after consultation.

A Greek manufacturer, Ieronimakis Inox SA, has been selected through a demanding tender process overseen by Dimitri Dondos, Chairman of the London foundation. Of the ten companies approached, three submitted viable prototypes of the box and liner, based on specifications provided by a team directed by Prof. Nicholas Pickwood. A committee was established to assess the bids, including Father Justin (represented by Petros Koufopoulos), Nicholas Pickwood, Heather Ravenberg and Earleen Brunner. In consideration of the key role played by the Association suisse des amis de la Fondation Sainte-Catherine in raising funds for the boxes, three members of the Swiss Board participated: Prof. Charles Méla, Me Nicolas Gagnebin and Me Romanos Skandamis. In addition, expert input was provided by a Lloyds Register inspector with expertise in stainless steel manufacture. The committee agreed that Ieronimakis Inox SA produced the best prototype and the most responsive proposal and offered the best conditions for manufacture, for a price that became competitive through negotiation and led to a choice ratified by the London, New York and Geneva Boards.

All that remains is the final refinement of the specifications and the fabrication of two new prototypes. The manufacture of the first run of 200 boxes should be completed before the end of 2018.

LIGATUS NEWS

The completion of the elegant new library, reading room and storage areas at the eastern end of the South Range of the monastery marks a significant moment in the Ligatus-Saint Catherine's Library Conservation Project. With the manufacture of the stainless steel conservation boxes set to begin before the end of the year, the large-scale protective work on the manuscript collection will almost be finished.

The boxes will be delivered to the monastery complete with a lining of Plastazote – a chemically inert expanded polyester foam – and thick, dense, acid-free millboard, to provide short-term insulation in the event of a fire. A sheet of activated carbon within the lining will absorb any potentially damaging off-gassing inside the closed boxes. An internal four-flap folder made of acid-free card will also be included. Each folder will need to be adapted to the book it will enclose, a task that will be accomplished on site by a small team of conservators. Pieces of Plastazote cut to fit the books will be glued to the inside of the folders to prevent the books from moving when the boxes are handled.

The same team of conservators will be able to start making bookshoes for the unboxed manuscripts and early printed books that need protection. Bookshoes, first designed by Nicholas Pickwood for use in National Trust libraries, are inexpensive protective enclosures made to fit individual books. They leave the spines and top edges of the books exposed, and therefore visible to visitors to the library, whilst protecting their sides from abrasion and, more importantly, providing support underneath the bookblock to protect the joints of the bindings from the otherwise inevitable effects of gravity. The Saint Catherine's bookshoes will be made from the sepia-coloured folding boxboard bought by the foundation some years ago expressly for this purpose.

The repair of individual books (those identified by the Condition Assessment Survey carried out from 2001 to 2005) cannot start until a conservation workshop is created, during Phase Two construction work to the west wing of the South Range. The workshop has already been designed. A flexible space, it will be able to accommodate the longest of the scrolls when unrolled, and to provide a separate, smaller enclosed space in which the humidity can be raised when required for work on parchment-leaved books.

The workshop will encompass a self-contained 'dirty room' in which dust-producing work can be carried out without contaminating the main workshop. The provision of mobile workbenches will also allow the workshop to be used for the conservation of large textiles, as well as icons and other works of art on paper, parchment and wood. A 'clean room' has been set aside for the delicate analytical equipment used for the scientific examination of the materials, especially pigments, of the books and other treasures found in the monastery. With this workshop in place, the monastery will be equipped to carry out the necessary conservation work to repair the books and make them available to scholars, and for digitising and exhibition.

PROFESSOR NICHOLAS PICKWOOD

MONASTERY CELEBRATES LIBRARY RENOVATION, APSE MOSAIC CONSERVATION

On Saturday, 16 December 2017 Saint Catherine's Monastery celebrated the successful renovation of the library and the consolidation, cleaning, and conservation of the sixth-century apse mosaic.

The event was honoured with the presence of representatives of the Egyptian government, especially the General and Governor of South Sinai Mr Khaled Fuda, the Minister of Antiquities Mr Khaled Anan, the Minister for Interior Development Mr Hesham al Sherif, the Head of South Sinai Security Major General Sabry al Gammal, and the representatives of the Greek Minister of Tourism, Ms E Kountouras and Ms Angeliki Hondromatidou.

Present also were the ambassadors of Greece, Mr Dimasis Michalis, Croatia, Mr Tomislav Bosniak, Ireland, Mr Vincent Herlily, Belgium, Mr Ludo Leo J. Rochette, Germany, Mr Julius Georg Kuy, Bulgaria, Mr Lubomir Nikolov Popov, Portugal, Dr Salvator Pinto Da Franca, and Serbia, Mr Dragan Bisenic. The conference was attended by more than 150 journalists from seventeen broadcast media, and the total number of guests exceeded 500.

The welcome of Archbishop Damianos of Sinai was followed by an audiovisual presentation on the history and renovation of the library by Prof. Petros Koufopoulos, Professor of Architectural Conservation at the University of Patras, Greece. Dr Roberto Nardi of the Centro di Conservazioni Archeologica, Rome contributed a presentation on the conservation of the apse mosaic.

His Eminence the Archbishop warmly thanked the sponsors of the library renovation, the Saint Catherine Foundation and its Royal Patron HRH The Prince of Wales, who for many years have supported the conservation and preservation of the Sinai library.

He also thanked the sponsors of the celebratory event, the Cultural and Educational Foundation of the Ambetios School of Cairo and the supporting donors of the Mount Sinai Foundation, Mr Atef Abdelaif, Mrs Katerina



From left to right Father Michael (*Skeophylax*), HE Hesham al Sherif, Minister for Interior Development, HE Khaled Anan, Minister of Antiquities, Father Justin (Librarian) and HE Khaled Fuda, Governor of South Sinai.

Mousbek and those who worked especially hard for the whole complex organization, Mr Nicholas Vadis, Representative of the Monastery, with his associates, Mr Antonis Kazamias, Mrs Vassos Charalambous and Mr Ioannis Tzoumerka.

The guests visited the library, the mosaic and the museum of the monastery, followed by lunch and their departure.

FATHER JUSTIN SINAITES

LONDON LECTURES FEATURE NEW RESEARCH, LEADING ACADEMICS

The Saint Catherine Foundation organised a series of three lectures for members on 30 November 2016, 19 January and 25 May 2017.

Professor Nigel Wilson of Oxford University, a winner of the British Academy's Kenyon Medal, gave a talk at Leighton House Museum on recent work on the Sinai manuscripts, in particular an exciting new discovery reported in the 2017 issue of *Sinaiticus* ('The Sinai Palimpsests Project' by Claudia Rapp and Michael Phelps, pp. 18-20). Illustrated on page 19, the palimpsest in question contained a previously unknown text by Hippocrates about herbal medicine. The news of this discovery made the front page of *The Times* of London shortly after.

The lecture series continued with Professor Janet Soskice, President of Jesus College, Cambridge, sharing thoughts – and many funny stories – about her best-selling book *Sisters of Sinai*. Her talk, 'The Magnificent Lady Bible Hunters: Two Victorian Heroines and the Manuscripts and Monastery of Saint Catherine', was rescheduled from its planned location at St Stephen's Church, Gloucester Road, to the nearby Rydges Hotel, but the warm wood-lined rooms and state-of-the-art equipment at the hotel proved a welcome and successful substitute.

Professor Soskice's account of the visits to the monastery by Agnes and Margaret Smith led aptly on to the third lecture in the series at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, 'Manuscripts, Monasteries and Mysteries: the adventures of a Victorian Bible scholar – James Rendel Harris'. Dr Alessandro Falcetta, Associate Professor of New Testament at VID University, Stavanger, Norway, held forth on his particular special subject, the life of James Rendel Harris. Professor Harris was considered a remarkable scholar. He discovered, among many other things, the first Syriac version manuscript of the *Apology of Aristides*. So famous was he in his own time that, when he was ship-wrecked off a small Mediterranean island, the locals recognised his name at once and were perfectly aware of who he was!

Dr Falcetta's biography of Rendel Harris, *The Daily Discoveries of a Bible Scholar and Manuscript Hunter*, is published by T&T Clark (2018).

ALISON EDELSTEN

SAINT CATHERINE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS 'BOISSONNAS IN EGYPT'

On view at the Royal Geographical Society in London (2 - 30 November 2017) and the Benaki Museum in Athens (19 March - 20 May 2018), 'Boissonnas in Egypt' presented the photographs taken by the celebrated Swiss photographer Fred Boissonnas (1858-1946) for his acclaimed book *Egypt* (1932), commissioned by King Fuad I, and for a second, unpublished volume on the Sinai. The exhibition was curated by Prof. Oriana Baddeley, Dean of Research, University of the Arts London, and member of the London and New York Boards of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Collaborating with Prof. Baddeley on the Athens exhibition was Dr George Manginis, member of the Benaki Museum's Executive Committee and author of *Mount Sinai: A History of Travellers and Pilgrims* (reviewed in this issue of *Sinaiticus*), and Ewelina Warner of the University of the Arts. The London exhibition was supported by the Saint Catherine Foundation with funding provided by the EFG Group and two anonymous donors. The Athens exhibition was sponsored by the John S Latsis Public Benefit Foundation.

During its month-long run in London, the exhibition attracted an enthusiastic museum-going public of around 1,000, not counting the many friends of the foundation and University of Arts London who attended the Private View and Twentieth Anniversary Gala. Some 4,000 people saw

the exhibition in Athens, responding to the advice of Stathis Tsagkarousianos, publisher of LIFO, Greece's foremost free-press paper and web-news channel: 'Go see this exhibition ... Small but done well and with deep knowledge ... For things we Greeks love'.

The exhibition catalogue was edited by Prof. Baddeley, sponsored by the EFG Group and published under the imprint of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Prof. Baddeley also organised a one-day conference on 'Boissonnas and Egypt' (Royal Geographical Society, 2 November 2017), supported by the University of the Arts London. International scholars presented Boissonnas's work, both in the context of 1920s Egypt and with reference to wider debates around photography and cultural geography: Dr George Manginis (*Into Cheltenham - On the Way to Mount Sinai*), Dr Ahmed Shams (*A Swiss Photographic Voyage*), Dr Estelle Sohier (*L'Égypte by Fred Boissonnas [1932]: a Photographic Monument for the Egyptian Nation*), and Dr Kathleen Brunner (*Boissonnas's Return to Egypt: the Unfinished Sinai Project*), with a final paper on *Boissonnas, Modernity and the Aesthetics of the Wilderness* by Prof. Baddeley. The documentary filmmaker Ramsay Cameron introduced his impressive reconstruction of Fred Boissonnas's 1935 lecture recounting his visit to the monastery. The film was also shown on a continuous loop at both exhibitions.

See page 10 for Dr Anne McCabe's review of the exhibition.

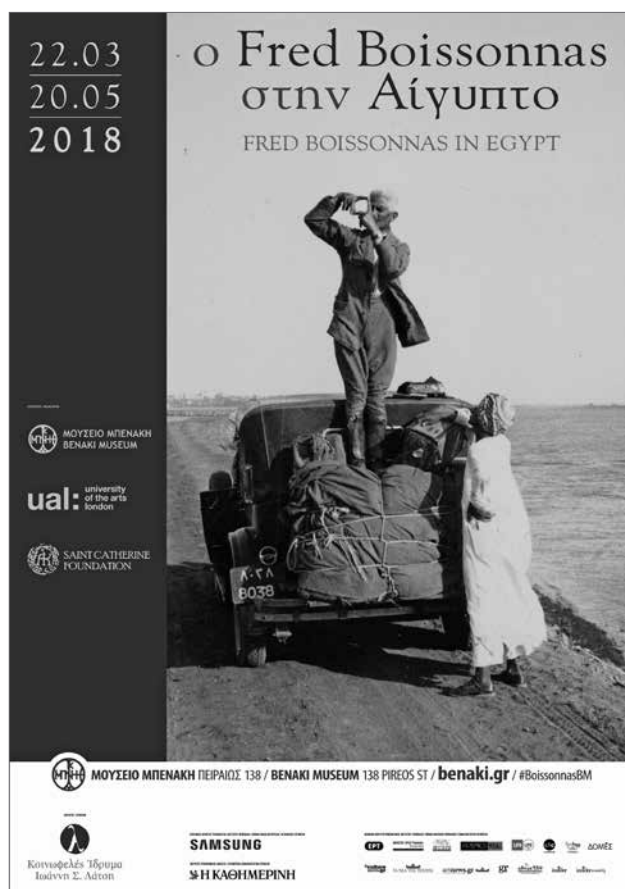
BOISSONNAS IN EGYPT IS AVAILABLE DIRECT FROM THE FOUNDATION

Copies of the *Boissonnas in Egypt* exhibition catalogue are available online (www.saintcatherinefoundation.org) or direct from the foundation's London office (paperback, 139 pages with 174 illustrations, £12.50 + packing and postage).

'EGYPT IN LONDON' WEEKEND RAISES SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS

'Boissonnas in Egypt' inspired the 'Egypt in London' fundraising weekend benefitting the Saint Catherine's Library Conservation Project. This special weekend of activities featured private visits to Sir John Soane's Museum, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and Highclere Castle, as well as Egyptian-themed events at Bridgewater House and Leighton House. The participating benefactors fell under the spell of Egyptomania as they explored landmarks from Kensington to Bloomsbury and beyond. A wonderful time was had by all in the service of a very good cause, the Library Conservation Project at Saint Catherine's. A total of £154,000 went towards the work in the library.

The Athens exhibition poster featured a photograph of Fred Boissonnas at work taken by his collaborator and travelling companion Paul Trembley.



BOARD CHANGES

LONDON

SCOTT FURSEDONN-WOOD, Deputy Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales, has joined the London Board of Trustees as representative of the foundation's Royal Patron. On secondment to the Royal Household from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Scott Fursedon-Wood has returned to London from Kolkata, where he served as Deputy High Commissioner and Head of Post.

The newest addition to the London Board, **ALISON EDELSTEN** combines a background in finance with a life-long interest in Latin and Greek. She is a Classics graduate and Thomas Pope Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford.

NEW YORK

In recognition of two decades of exceptional service to the monastery and foundation, the New York Board of Directors has named retiring Board member and former Vice President **MARY JAHARIS** an Honorary Patron. This new role will allow Mary to continue her close association with Saint Catherine's.

ZOE MOSHOVITIS has also stepped down from the Board after 20 years of service, including a term as Vice President. From her home in Washington DC, Zoe commuted regularly to New York, working tirelessly to support events and activities like the Metropolitan Museum galas and Library Grand Tour.

FROSO BEYS was a very active Board member for some 15 years, serving for a time as joint Vice President with Zoe Moshovitis. Froso's hands-on commitment made her a much-appreciated force on the Board.

ROBERT SHAW generously contributed his legal and commercial expertise, advising particularly on fundraising and grants. He leaves after 12 years of dedicated involvement.

The consummate accountant, **BOB TORTORELLA** served as Treasurer from the foundation's incorporation and went on to join the Board by unanimous request.

Four new Board members bring fresh energy to the American Associates:

PROFESSOR BETSY BOLMAN is a Byzantine expert lauded for her work on the White and Red Monasteries near Sohag, Egypt and her contribution to the 2012 'Byzantium and Islam' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum.

LAURA GEORGAS CARR is well known to Board members in Europe and the United States, thanks to the Georgas family's longstanding support for the foundation and monastery.

With her husband Mike, **LIBBY ANGELJADES** has been a friend of Saint Catherine's for many years. She helped to organise the successful 2016 Benefit Dinner at Battery Gardens, serving as one of the Event Chairs.

Completing the new Board intake, **HRH CROWN PRINCESS MARIE-CHANTAL OF GREECE** continues the Greek Royal Family's tradition of support for the Sinai monastery.

GENEVA

The Board of the Swiss Friends regrets the departure of **ME NICOLAS GAGNEBIN**, founding member, Secretary, inimitable organiser and advisor.

OBITUARY

Dr John Brademas 1927 - 2016



John Brademas (*first row, far left*) and the Board of Directors of the American Associates at the 2005 Annual General Meeting.

Longtime member of the United States House of Representatives (1959-81) and New York University President (1981-92), John Brademas joined the Board of Directors of the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation at its inception, just one of the many charitable organisations with which he was associated. John was always ready to share contacts and information, always willing to call on one of his 'good friends' in Washington or New York for help with foundation business and activities. Active well into his eighties, John served on the Board until 2015, just one year before his death.

Greek causes were dear to John, born in Indiana to a Greek immigrant father, Stephen Brademas, a restaurant manager, and American schoolteacher mother, Beatrice. From his early years in South Bend, John went on to study at Harvard University and the University of Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

John won his congressional seat at age 31 and was re-elected ten times, serving continuously until 1981, the last four years as Majority Whip. Chair of President Clinton's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (1994-2001), he founded two centres at NYU, the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, dedicated to scholarship on modern Spain, and the John Brademas Center for the Study of Congress.

John is survived by his wife of 39 years, the dermatologist Dr Mary Ellen Brademas, three step-children and six step-grandchildren.

EVENTS

GENEVA

Activités de l'Association suisse des Amis de la Fondation Sainte-Catherine en 2017

La situation préoccupante du monastère sous la menace des actions terroristes dans la péninsule du Sinaï a conduit notre Association à inviter pour la conférence annuelle de son Assemblée générale une personnalité faisant autorité en la matière.

Le 23 mai, au prestigieux *Cercle de la Terrasse* de Genève, le professeur Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou a livré une pénétrante analyse, dans sa conférence intitulée « Le Sinaï au cœur des tempêtes moyen-orientales ». Professeur d'Histoire Internationale au *Graduate Institute Geneva*, professeur invité à l'École doctorale de Sciences Po Paris, après avoir occupé les fonctions de directeur associé du programme de politique humanitaire et de recherches sur les conflits de l'Université de Harvard et de doyen académique du *Geneva Center for Security Policy*, le conférencier a également été ministre des Affaires étrangères de Mauritanie. Depuis 2017, il est membre du *High Level Panel on Migrations* des Nations-Unies. Tout en soulignant la reconfiguration des dynamiques régionales et la redéfinition de la politique des grandes puissances extérieures, il a mis en évidence la réalité, depuis la fin de l'empire ottoman, d'un siècle d'absence de construction de l'État et l'échec, dans ces conditions, des printemps arabes encore inaboutis.

La vie de notre Association a, d'autre part, été marquée par la participation de plusieurs de ses membres à l'événement organisé à Londres du 2 au 5 novembre sur le thème *Egypt in London*, notamment dans le cadre du colloque tenu à la *Royal Geographical Society* autour de l'exposition remarquable des photographies de Fred Boissonnas.

La fin des travaux de restauration du bâtiment de la Bibliothèque du monastère de Sainte Catherine a enfin permis de concentrer désormais nos efforts sur la campagne de levée de fonds en vue de la fabrication des boîtes métalliques, conformément à l'objectif spécifique que nous nous étions assigné, tout en continuant notre travail pour faire connaître les richesses intellectuelles, morales et spirituelles d'un monastère vivant depuis quinze siècles.

CHARLES MÉLA, PRÉSIDENT



Professeur et Mme Charles Méla, Mme Michèle Givaudan (droite).



Mme Murielle Dubois-Ferrière (gauche), Mme Maria Livanos Cattai, Mme Maria Embiricos.



Le conférencier, Professeur Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou.

LONDON

'Boissonnas in Egypt' Conference, private view and dinner Royal Geographical Society 2 November 2017

Fred Boissonnas's exceptional photographs of Egypt were the subject of the 'Boissonnas in Egypt' exhibition and conference at the Royal Geographical Society – and the talk of the private view and gala dinner marking the Saint Catherine Foundation's twentieth anniversary.



Conference panel discussion led by Prof. Oriana Baddeley, Dean of Research, UAL.



Prof. Ian Christie (*left*), Birkbeck College, University of London and Dr Ahmed Shams, Durham University, founder of Sinai Peninsula Research.



Prof. Carol Tulloch, TrAIN Research Centre and UAL (*left*), and Miranda Miller Frost.



HRH Princess Danica of Serbia (*left*), HRH Crown Princess Katherine of Serbia and Beatrice Demetriades.



Doug Patterson and Lady Gibbons.



Prof. Charles Méla addressing the gathering.



Me Romanos Skandamis and Ewelina Warner.

ATHENS

'Boissonnas in Egypt' Reception and preview Benaki Museum-Pireos 138

19 March 2018

Greek friends of the Saint Catherine Foundation turned out for the Athens preview of 'Boissonnas in Egypt'. Boissonnas is famous in Greece for his extraordinary photographs of the Parthenon, Mt Olympus, Meteora and many other sites, but his Egyptian work was, until now, less well known.



The exhibition installed.



Dr George Manginis of the Benaki Museum's Executive Committee points out highlights of the exhibition.



Heather Ravenberg, Senior Administrator of the Saint Catherine Foundation (*left*) with the curators: Ewelina Warner, Prof. Oriana Baddeley and Dr George Manginis.



Ramsay Cameron (*left*), Vaggelis Chronis, Henrietta Latsis, Prof. Oriana Baddeley, Margarita Latsis and Dr George Manginis.



Fouli Chronis and Maria Embiricos.



Stavros Papandonopoulos (*left*), Aliko-Marcadia Lampropoulos and Stefanos Angelopoulos.



At the reception: Lina Lampropoulos (*left*), Henrietta Latsis and Cadio Lampropoulos.

REVIEWS

‘BOISSONNAS IN EGYPT’ EXHIBITION, LONDON AND ATHENS

ANNE McCABE

Devotees of Sinai and of photography were recently treated to a splendid exhibition of images of Egypt, of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, and of the landscapes around it by the Swiss photographer Fred Boissonnas, organised by Professor Oriana Baddeley with the support of the Saint Catherine Foundation. The photographs are part of the Roussen Collection, housed at the foundation, a precious archive which includes more than 500 black-and-white negatives, 35 colour glass plates, Agfacolor negatives, as well as unpublished typescripts and manuscript essays on Sinai by Boissonnas himself. Behind them is a bittersweet story of the illustrious photographer's last projects, books on the Orthodox world and on Sinai, both sadly left incomplete.

François Frédéric Boissonnas was an indefatigable traveller who combined a gift for composing photographs with a sympathetic eye for the subjects he encountered. The images he captured are thus rich in both documentary and artistic value, and it was eminently appropriate for them to be displayed at the Royal Geographical Society in London, and also at the Benaki Museum – 138 Pireos in Athens. Boissonnas's Egyptian photographs and their historical context have been studied by Ewelina Warner, Oriana Baddeley, Estelle Sohler, George Manginis, Ahmed Shams and Kathleen Brunner, in essays published in the catalogue of the exhibition (edited by Oriana Baddeley), and also presented at a day conference at the RGS in November 2017. A film created by Ramsay Cameron using Boissonnas's photographs and essays was shown at the conference and at the exhibitions.

Boissonnas had achieved renown through his stylish and luxuriously produced albums *En Grèce par Monts et par Vaux* and *Des Cyclades en Crète au Gré du Vent*, published in 1910 and 1919 respectively. Unlike many Philhellenic publications, they do not focus exclusively on antique monuments, but also celebrate medieval and vernacular architecture, land- and seascapes, people, costume and scenes of everyday life. Boissonnas's travel companion and co-author was the art historian Daniel Baud-Bovy, curator at the Musée Rath in Geneva, where the photographs were first displayed. Notwithstanding the rigours of travel in Greece in the first few years of the 20th century, it is clear that the two collaborators had a wonderful time. It is indicative of their friendship that Boissonnas's son Henri married Baud-Bovy's daughter Valentine. And it is a testament to their affectionate and enquiring attitude to Greece that Daniel Baud-Bovy's son Samuel became an ethnomusicologist who collected folk songs of the Aegean islands and Greek mainland, as well as a scholar of modern Greek literature.

King Fuad I of Egypt owned and admired a copy of *En Grèce par Monts et par Vaux*, and he commissioned from Boissonnas in 1929 a similar album dedicated to his own country. The photographer, then aged 70, was invited to spend nearly a year travelling from one end of Egypt to the other, with access guaranteed and difficulties smoothed by a firman from the king. The result was a magnificent volume published in 1932, patterned after the two Greek books in scale and material (with decorative drawings and headings by Henri Boissonnas), and intended as a celebration of a newly independent state with an ancient and complex identity. In *Égypte*, monuments of all periods, people and landscapes off the conventional tourist track are portrayed as Greece had been, with a romantic, aesthetic, but also scholarly eye.

In 1929 the Cairene Greek banker Paul Tricoglou had aided Boissonnas to visit and photograph Sinai for a work on Orthodox monuments that was never completed. When Boissonnas returned to Egypt in 1933, he took hundreds of photographs of the region for another album to be entitled *Au Sinai*. The mountainous landscape of the Sinai clearly entranced the Swiss author of numerous books on the Alps, who had also made the ascent of Olympus. The Monastery of Saint Catherine, with elements of Greek and Egyptian culture, was populated by monks and Bedouin in traditional and exotic costumes, and the geometric forms of its architecture offered enticing angles to a photographer who had worked with Le Corbusier. Moreover the Biblical associations of the region lent an added dimension of literary, historical and religious interest, which Boissonnas emphasized in his marketing of the book.

Although the pre-industrial scenes and landscapes recorded in *Égypte* were under threat from modern life even at the time that Boissonnas was taking his photographs, it is reassuring to see that the landscapes of the Sinai and the Monastery of Saint Catherine have not changed too much since then. It is a pity that Boissonnas's planned volume on Sinai was never published, despite the photographer's attempts to attract sponsors through an illustrated lecture series. But thanks to the efforts of the Saint Catherine Foundation to preserve and make public a unique archive of material, Boissonnas's unknown and important images of Sinai have once again been brought to light.

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**GEORGE MANGINIS, *MOUNT SINAI: A HISTORY OF TRAVELLERS AND PILGRIMS.*
HAUS PUBLISHING, 2016 (ISBN 978-1-910376-50-8).**

MELANIE GIBSON



Summit of Mount Sinai or Jebel Musa by Edward Thomas Daniell (British, 1804-1842). Watercolour, gouache and graphite on paper, 33.2 x 49.4 cm, 1840. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, Connecticut.

Dr George Manginis, academic director of the Benaki Museum, Athens and author of this fascinating book, became enthralled with the site of Mount Sinai during four seasons of excavation work with the Hellenic Archaeological Mission at South Sinai from 1998 to 2003. The towering peak, known as Jabal Musa in Arabic, is recognised as the place where Moses met God and received the Ten Commandments, as described in the Book of Exodus. The Greek archaeological team made an exciting discovery on the summit – a sixth-century basilica that was probably destroyed in an eighth-century earthquake. While the material finds were few and fairly haphazard, this lack of physical evidence spurred the author on a quest to recreate the biography of the place, telling the story of the pilgrims, the scholars and the simply curious who visited it over a period of nearly two millennia.

The story begins in the early Christian period when Christian devotees travelled to south Sinai in search of Biblical landmarks. When they located 'Mount Sinai' and the 'Burning Bush', they settled in the location as hermits, praying in niches carved from the granite mountain. Pilgrims started to arrive, the summit of the mountain always visited by day since 'crashes of thunder and other terrifying manifestations of divine power' could be heard at night. In the year 383 Egeria, an adventurous Spanish nun, made the steep ascent 'as if going up a wall'; her account of the journey is the earliest to survive and contains details of the pilgrim's path and the church at the summit.

In the sixth century Emperor Justinian ordered the construction of an imposing basilica 'with columns of marble and doors of bronze'. It was built on the summit of the mountain, with a fortress at its foot to protect the site of the Burning Bush. The imperial building project

consolidated the ecclesiastical importance of Jabal Musa; the locality became an important, although rather remote pilgrimage destination on the Holy Land tour, alongside Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth.

The association of St Catherine with the monastery inside the fortress did not occur until much later. Catherine was a young woman of royal birth martyred in Alexandria in the third century. Her body was supposedly transported from the summit of Mount Sinai to the basilica within the monastery in the early medieval period. Her relics were venerated at shrines all over Europe, but pilgrims longed to visit her most important resting place in Sinai. Most of the narratives that survive from the 11th to the 16th centuries were written by European pilgrims, who established a tradition of climbing the 'path of Moses' and the peaks of Jabal Musa and Jabal Kathrin on successive days, while staying in the refectory overnight.

Throughout the Crusader period, the Sinai region was under the control of three successive Islamic dynasties, the Fatimids, Ayyubids and Mamluks, who with the exception of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim, granted the monks political protection, as well as presenting them with gifts and financial assistance. It is even possible that Saladin visited the Chapel of the Burning Bush, entering 'with humility and bare feet'. Jewish pilgrims were equally welcome and are known to have visited from the early Christian period onwards.

The 19th century is the last stage in the biography of Jabal Musa, transforming the pilgrimage site into a place of archaeological exploration and a tourist attraction for those adventurous enough to make the journey. A flood of books and guides published from the 1830s onwards made the site accessible to a far greater number of armchair travellers, who could effortlessly satisfy their curiosity by leafing through drawings, engravings and photographs of the landscape and the monastery buildings. A good selection of these are illustrated in the book, including albumen prints by James Macdonald, a photographer who accompanied the first Ordnance Survey mapping project conducted outside Britain.

This study of Mount Sinai is satisfying on many levels: meticulously researched and handsomely illustrated, it charts the long history of a place that is both real and legendary, a granite mountain that is also the 'Mount of the Law'.

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‘NEW LIGHT ON OLD MANUSCRIPTS: RECENT ADVANCES IN PALIMPSEST STUDIES’, AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, VIENNA

SEBASTIAN BROCK

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine possesses one of the most important collections of manuscripts in the world; although the majority are in Greek, there are considerable numbers written in other languages and scripts. Most of the older manuscripts were written on parchment, a commodity that was evidently in short supply at times between the eighth and 13th centuries; as a result the texts on unwanted manuscripts were erased and re-used. The monastery is particularly rich in these palimpsested manuscripts, but until recently many of the undertexts have been very difficult or impossible to read. Matters, however, have now changed with the development of various methods of spectral imaging. During the last ten years (2009-18) the monastery has collaborated with the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL) in California on the Sinai Palimpsest Project, generously funded by the Arcadia Foundation. A preliminary notice about the project was given by Father Justin, the librarian of the monastery, in *Sinaiticus* (2014, pp. 4-5), with an update by Claudia Rapp and Michael Phelps in *Sinaiticus* for 2017 (pp. 18-20), where a description of the different techniques employed is provided.

The project has been directed by Michael Phelps of EMEL, with the late Nikolaos Zarkantzas as Assistant Director, while the Scholarly Director has been Professor Claudia Rapp of the University of Vienna, a Trustee of the Saint Catherine Foundation in London. In order to mark the completion of the project and the end of the funding, an international conference entitled ‘New Light on Old Manuscripts: Recent Advances in Palimpsest Studies’ was held in Vienna on 25-27 April 2018. The conference opened with a public lecture given by Father Justin the previous day. The following three days were filled with specialised papers given by both the imaging scientists and the various language specialists to whom images of the newly revealed undertexts had been sent for identification.

Whereas almost all of the upper texts of the re-used parchment manuscripts were in Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Arabic and Slavonic, the undertexts revealed several further languages – Latin, Armenian, Ethiopic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and Caucasian Albanian. This last language (which is unrelated to the Albanian of Albania) had previously only been known indirectly, and so the discovery of extensive parts of two lectionary manuscripts in this language as undertexts is a matter of great excitement (a brief article on this featured in *Sinaiticus* for 2004, p. 12).

Many of the undertexts could be readily identified as biblical, and several of these in both Greek and in Syriac could be dated to the fifth or sixth century. Of especial interest, of course, are the hitherto unknown texts, such as a fragment from a mythological poem in Greek, and a folio

(also in Greek) with an illustration of a plant, evidently part of a handbook of medicinal plants. The upper text of the latter contains a very early translation of the Gospels into Arabic. Another re-used folio in the same Arabic manuscript turns out to contain another illustration, this time from a Latin novella on the exploits of Apollonius of Tyre. The scribe who wrote out the Arabic Gospels was clearly desperate for parchment, for he re-used folios from yet other manuscripts, two of which are from medical works, both in Greek, one belonging to a work by Hippocrates, and the other from a previously unknown medical work. Syriac scribes also re-used a number of earlier medical works in Syriac; one of these, on a single folio still in the monastery library, belongs to a Syriac translation of a work by Galen, and is part of a manuscript most of which is now in private ownership in the United States. Thanks to the generosity of its present owner, this manuscript has been made available to scholars in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, where multispectral images of its undertext, all belonging to the same work by Galen, have been made and are currently being studied by a group of scholars at Manchester University, led by Professor Peter Pormann (see opposite). Evidently when the manuscript was removed from the monastery library – probably some time in the later 19th or early 20th century – a few folios must have fallen away, one of which is still in the monastery and so serves as a witness to the original ownership, while a few others have been tracked down in Paris, Rome and Harvard University. All too many other manuscripts originally belonging to the monastery have suffered similar fates; in the case of the removed or dismembered manuscripts in Syriac, there is now an invaluable guide provided by Paul Géhin’s *Les manuscrits syriaques de parchemin du Sinai et leurs membra disjecta* (2017).

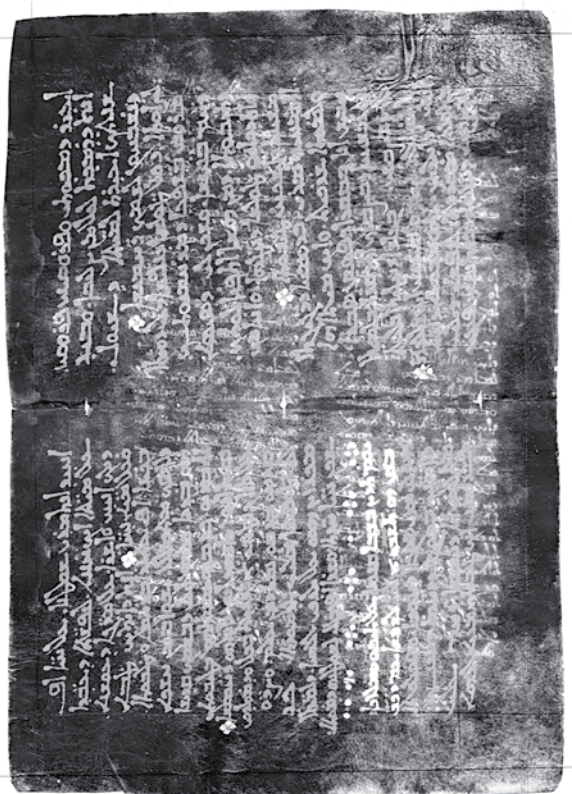
Probably the most important of the Syriac undertexts are 24 folios from a third Old Syriac Gospel manuscript. The standard Syriac Gospel text, still in use today, is known as the Peshitta, which dates from about AD 400. An earlier form of the Syriac Gospel text, translated from Greek perhaps in the second century, has hitherto been known only from two incomplete manuscripts, one of which is another palimpsest in the monastery, the famous *Sinaiticus Syriacus* (Syriac 30), edited by Agnes Lewis, one of the two ‘Sisters of Sinai’ who are the subject of Janet Soskice’s fascinating book under that title. For scholars concerned with the early transmission of the text of the Gospels, this new addition to the witnesses of the Old Syriac translation is of considerable importance.

Now that the project has reached its completion the images of the palimpsests are being hosted by UCLA and are available for consultation at sinaipalimpsests.org.

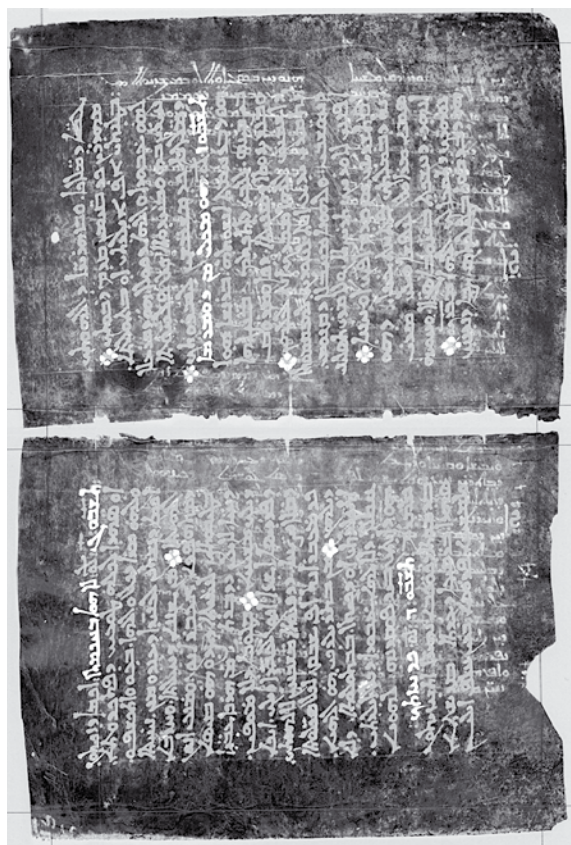
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SINAI SYRIAC MANUSCRIPTS IN EXILE

GRIGORY KESSEL AND NATALIA SMELOVA



1 SGP, fol. 120r-121v (*On Simple Drugs*, Book Three), CVA processed. The quire signature *nam* (six) can be seen bottom right.



2 SGP, fol. 117r-124v, CVA processed. The end of Book Two and the *pinax* (list of chapters) of Book Three.

It is a well-known fact that anybody interested in the Sinai manuscripts in a particular language (Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Georgian, Slavonic and so on) must take into consideration not only the old collection and the New Finds, unearthed in 1975, but also a third group, the diaspora manuscripts, manuscripts once kept at the monastery but now dispersed. This third group is the most elusive in terms of exact numbers and location. Many diaspora manuscripts were apparently removed illicitly, and their actual whereabouts are not always easy to ascertain. Sadly, the library of Saint Catherine's, celebrated for its exceptional holdings, has become nearly as well known for the manuscripts that are no longer there. The famous Codex Sinaiticus (now British Library Add. 43725) takes pride of place among them.

It is hardly possible to give an estimate of the total number of dispersed manuscripts. The task of finding and identifying these orphan-like manuscripts is far from easy and rarely attracts scholars. So it is all the more welcome that, in the case of Syriac manuscripts of Sinaitic provenance, the majority, in particular those on parchment, have been masterfully identified by Paul Géhin¹.

According to the catalogue of Murad Kamil, the old collection of Syriac manuscripts consists of 266 items, some 60 of which are on parchment and the rest on paper. The New Finds comprise 170 more or less complete manuscripts (including nine in Christian Palestinian Aramaic) and 100 fragments (including 18 in Christian Palestinian Aramaic). Some of these manuscripts were originally associated with items in the old collection, but the vast majority were previously unknown. In addition, according to the new study of Géhin, 37 Syriac manuscripts of Sinaitic provenance can be found in various libraries and collections worldwide.

It is not always easy to ascertain whether a manuscript or fragment once belonged to the monastery's collection, not least because the majority of Sinai manuscripts were never catalogued in detail. The photographs of the collection made for the Library of Congress by the Mount Sinai Expedition of 1949-50 are of course invaluable, although the black and white microfilms sometimes prove unusable.² It is hoped therefore that a new catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts, prepared according to current cataloguing practices, would assist in the identification of orphan manuscripts. By the same token, comprehensive digitization would do much to further research into the manuscripts and the identification of their dispersed parts.

Slow as it may be, the progress of scholarship makes it possible to identify a particular manuscript as originating from the monastery's collection. In the pages that follow, we would like to present some of the Syriac diaspora manuscripts, with a particular focus on the Syriac Galen Palimpsest (pictured left 1 and 2), the manuscript that has recently become the subject of a major research project.

The Book of Perfection by Sahdona/Martyrius (early seventh century), an introduction to the life of spiritual perfection, is one of the notable works of the Syriac monastic tradition. Translated into Georgian and Arabic,

it apparently enjoyed widespread popularity.³ Unlike other Syriac monastic works of this period, which have many quotations from the Patristic literature, Sahdona's text features mostly Biblical references, with only a few non-Biblical borrowings.

The sole surviving copy of the text is preserved in a manuscript housed today in Strasbourg's Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire (BNU 4116). This manuscript is a rare document that attests to the special significance that the Sinai monastery held for Syriac Christians. The manuscript was produced in Edessa in the year 837 CE and was subsequently donated to 'the shrine of Mar Moses on the Holy Mountain of Sinai'. It must have left the monastery by the end of the 19th century and is no longer intact. Fragments deriving from the manuscript have been identified in the Russian National Library (Syr. New Series 13), Biblioteca Ambrosiana (A 296 inf, ff. 131-42) and Mingana Collection, Birmingham (Mingana Syr. 650). Another fragment identified among the New Finds by Sebastian Brock (M45N) made it possible to prove that this unique manuscript was indeed originally preserved at Saint Catherine's Monastery.

The *Codex Climaci Rescriptus*, one of the famous Sinai palimpsests, left the monastery sometime in the second half of the 19th century and was subsequently acquired by Agnes Smith Lewis, who was not aware of its Sinaitic provenance⁴. The manuscript was kept at Westminster College, Cambridge until 2009, when it was put on sale at Sotheby's. In 2010, it was purchased by the Green family for the Bible Museum in Washington, DC. The overt text of the palimpsest contains the Syriac translation of John Climacus's *Ladder of Paradise* (hence the title), which remains so far unpublished. This is all the more surprising given its obvious significance, not only for the history of Syriac Christianity (one regularly finds excerpts from the *Ladder* in the monastic miscellanies) but also for the textual study of the Greek original. While the earliest manuscript evidence in Greek dates back to the 10th century, the recorded Syriac tradition starts in the 8th century at the least. As we know today, the codex was produced, presumably in the 9th century, using recycled leaves of no fewer than eight different manuscripts. Six of the leaves are fragments of the Old and New Testament in Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and two are Gospel fragments in Greek. The manuscript is incomplete and lacks a number of folios. One of them is kept in Birmingham (Mingana Syr. 637). Again, the felicitous discovery of a fragment among the New Finds (M38N) clearly demonstrated that the manuscript was once the property of the monastery.

Another important palimpsest originating from Sinai is Vatican Syr. 623, with a fragment preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris Syr. 378/II). The manuscript reached the Vatican Library through the German manuscript collector Friedrich Grote, who by the end of the 19th century had built, under unknown circumstances, an impressive collection of manuscripts and fragments with a Sinaitic provenance. The codex was completed in 886 CE in the 'monastery of Mar Moses'

and is therefore considered to be the oldest dated Syriac manuscript produced on Sinai. It contains a number of monastic and hagiographical works, three of them testifying to the history of monasticism on Sinai: Pseudo-Ammonius's *Report Concerning the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaitbou*, *Tales of the Sinai Fathers* by Anastasius of Sinai, and Pseudo-Nilus's *Narrations*.⁵ Curiously, among the monastic texts is a fragment of Sahdona/Martyrius's *Book of Perfection* that apparently was copied directly from the above-mentioned Edessene manuscript of 837 CE, donated to the monastery just a few decades earlier. Roughly half the codex is a palimpsest (fol. 105-226, some folios being double palimpsests), with the undertext containing fragments in five different languages: Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic. The texts that have been identified include a previously unattested Arabic version of Theon of Alexandria's Commentary on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*, and fragments of two comedies of Menander, one of which was previously unknown.⁶

Among the Syriac palimpsests originating from Mount Sinai, one of the most outstanding in terms of importance and scholarly engagement is the Syriac Galen Palimpsest (SGP). This valuable manuscript is now owned by a private collector in the United States, who purchased it from Sotheby's in March 2002. In 2009 and 2010 the owner initiated the conservation of the manuscript (which involved dis- and rebinding) and its multispectral digital imaging, both undertaken at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. Following this, high-resolution images were made freely available online, now hosted by the University of Pennsylvania Libraries at their OPenn portal, URL: <http://digitalgalen.net>.

The *scriptio superior* of the SGP presents a particular form of the *Oktōēchos* containing canons for the weekdays, *kanōnes parakletikoi*, of mixed Sabbaitic-Constantinopolitan origin, which apparently testify to the introduction of a new standard version of liturgical book in the Melkite communities in and around the city of Antioch in the late 10th and 11th centuries, following the Byzantine reconquest of Syria and Anatolia.

Already in the early 20th century, the primary identification of the *scriptio inferior* of the palimpsest was proposed by Anton Baumstark for the Hiersemann's sales catalogue of 1922. He recognised the text as a medical work of utmost importance. However, the first definite identification was made some 80 years later when Sebastian Brock established that the text was part of the Syriac translation of Galen's *On Simple Drugs* produced in the sixth century by Sergius of Reš 'Aynā (d. 536), otherwise known in a single sixth- or early seventh-century manuscript from the British Library, Add. 14661. Fragments from Books Six to Eight, also preserved in the British Library manuscript, were recognised throughout the palimpsest. However, taking into account that the SGP is considerably more extensive than the former, Siam Bhayro and other scholars working on the palimpsest at this earlier stage had assumed that it contained fragments of other parts

of Galen's treatise, which consists of 11 books in total. A short time afterwards, Grigory Kessel was able to provide corroborating evidence for this, having identified the first passages from Books Two, Four and Nine. Thanks to Grigory Kessel's successful efforts in finding missing leaves from the SGP in the Vatican Library, Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, Houghton Library and among the New Finds of Saint Catherine's Monastery, the secondary manuscript was reconstituted in full.

Since 2015, the SGP has become the focus of a major project at the University of Manchester entitled 'The Syriac Galen Palimpsest: Galen's *On Simple Drugs* and the Recovery of Lost Texts through Sophisticated Imaging Techniques', headed by Professor Peter E. Pormann and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/M005704/1; September 2015 to February 2020).

The philological interest apart, the starting point for the project was the application of an advanced computational method of post-processing – the Canonical Variates Analysis (CVA), or Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) – to the digital multispectral images, realised by Bill Sellers. The Digital Humanities methods included the creation of a bilingual Graeco-Syriac corpus for Books Six to Eight of Galen's treatise within the Sketch Engine platform, which enables cross-search by word, sequence of letters or phrase, with additional search criteria such as context. All the described methods were successfully utilised by Naima Afif and Natalia Smelova, allowing them to identify the entire palimpsest, with the exception of three folios which remain unreadable so far.

In parallel to this, a collation chart for the codicology of the original medical manuscript was created based on the textual identifications and the study of the parchment, mostly from the pre-conservation colour photographs of the bound palimpsest (<http://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/OtherCollections/html/PC4/>). It was established that the original manuscript must have consisted of at least 22 quinions (quires of five bifolia, amounting to ten folios), 14 of which have survived in full or in part. The parchment is folded flesh side in, and thus each quire begins and ends with the hair side. As it was possible to recognise two quire signatures in Syriac numerals – *ḥaw* for quire six (see illustration 1) and *ṯē* for quire nine, it could be deduced that three quires were missing from the beginning of the manuscript and that the preserved text starts with quire four. One full quire is missing in the middle of the codex, and at least four quires are missing at the end. This would suggest that the original manuscript must have been imperfect due to a damaged binding prior to palimpsesting.

The results of the identification, supported by the codicological reconstruction, are as follows: the original medical manuscript of the SGP most probably contained the whole of Galen's *On Simple Drugs*, of which fragments of Books Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine have survived. Thanks to the identification of the quire signatures, one can surmise that three missing quinions at the beginning contained the whole of Book One and the first chapter of Book Two. It seems very

likely that Book One was preceded by a long translator's introduction to the work, probably with some added material, perhaps another work, rather shorter than the main treatise. The text preserved in the SGP starts with the second chapter of Book Two and continues through to the third chapter of Book Nine. Each book is preceded by a *pinax*, a list of chapters. (See illustration 2.) Some (Books Six, Seven and Eight) include the preface of the translator Sergius. (These prefaces also survive in the British Library manuscript and were published with a German translation by Adalbert Merx). A preface may also appear at the beginning of Book Nine, although the folio cannot be easily read. From what one can ascertain at this stage, only Book Three is preserved in full; all the other books contain lacunae, from one folio (Book Five) to one quire (Book Six).

Although some fascinating discoveries have already been made, the most demanding and rewarding task lies ahead, as the Manchester team embarks on the preparation of a critical edition of Galen's *On Simple Drugs* in Syriac.⁷

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1. Paul Géhin, *Les manuscrits syriques de parchemin du Sinai et leurs membra disjecta* (CSCO 665; Subs. 136). Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
2. The microfilms have been digitized recently by the Library of Congress and are now freely available (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/manuscripts-in-st-catherines-monastery-mount-sinai/>).
3. Its edition and French translation were prepared by André de Halleux and published in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 200-01, 214-15, 252-53, 254-55 (1960, 1961, 1965).
4. See Agnes Smith Lewis, *Codex Climaci Rescriptus: Fragments of Sixth Century Palestinian Syriac Texts of the Gospels, of the Acts of the Apostles and of St. Paul's Epistles, also Fragments of an Early Palestinian Lectionary of the Old Testament, etc.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909, pp. XI-XII. The manuscript came into the possession of Lewis in three parts: one folio was purchased in Cairo in 1895; 89 folios were acquired from a Berlin scholar in 1905; and 48 folios were purchased, again in Egypt, in 1906.
5. The English translation of these and other historical accounts can be found in D. Caner, *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai. Translated Texts for Historians*, 53. Liverpool, 2010.
6. Francesco D'Aiuto, 'Graeca in codici orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana (con i resti di un manoscritto tardoantico delle commedie di Menandro)', in L. Perria (ed.), *Tra Oriente e Occidente: scritture e libri greci fra le regioni orientali di Bisanzio e l'Italia*, Rome: Università di Roma La Sapienza, 2003, pp. 266-83.
7. For an up-to-date presentation of the project's current results, see Afif, N., Arsene, C., Bhayro, S., Calà, I., Daccache, J., Hawley, R., Kessel, G., Pormann, P.E., Sellers, W., Smelova, N., 'Continuing research on the Syriac Galen Palimpsest: Collaborative Implementation within the Framework of Two European Projects', *Semitica et Classica* 9 (2017), pp. 261-68; Afif, N., Bhayro, S., Kessel, G., Pormann, P.E., Sellers, W.I., Smelova, N., 'The Syriac Galen Palimpsest. A Tale of Two Texts', *Manuscript Studies. A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 3.1 (2018), pp. 111-154; Afif, N., Bhayro, S., Pormann, P.E., Sellers, W.I., Smelova, N., 'Analyzing Images, Editing Texts: The Manchester Project', *Manuscript Studies. A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 3.1 (2018), pp. 155-185.

AN EARLY BYZANTINE MARTYR INSCRIPTION IN SAINT CATHERINE'S MONASTERY

DANIEL F CANER



The Saint Catherine's martyr inscription.

Visitors admiring the splendours of the basilica church at Saint Catherine's Monastery might easily pass the small rectangular room located along its southwest side (illustrated opposite). Known as the 'Chapel of the Holy Fathers Slaughtered at Sinai and Rhaithou', it is a relatively humble space, featuring few decorations apart from its green iconostasis. Inserted in its back wall, however, is a small (0.91 x 0.25 m) grey and white slab of marble bearing three indentations that once held iron crosses (pictured at the top of the page). Above this, on the marble, an attentive visitor will discern two faint lines of Greek. Inscribed with letter forms that indicate a late sixth- or early seventh-century date, the inscription reads:

[+] Τῆς δ δεκάδος τὴν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος κολυμβήθραν
ζηλώσαντες οἱ ἱσάριθμοι ὄσοι π(ατέ)ρ(ε)ς // ἐνθάδε
κατάκεινται, ὧν ἡ εὐφροσύνη ἡ βάτος ἡ ἀληθινὴ ὑπάρχει·
δι' ὧν ὁ θ(εὸ)ς σώσον ἡμᾶς [+]

[+] Having emulated the baptism by blood of the 4-ten, the equal-in-number Holy Fathers // lie in this place. Theirs is the joyous and true [Burning] Bush. Through them, may God save us [+]

The name given to this room would lead one to assume that the inscription commemorated early Christian monks who suffered martyrdom at Mount Sinai and Raithou (modern Wādī al-Tur/Ras Raya), a port on the Red Sea coast that became the other chief monastic site on the southern Sinai before the Arab conquests. We know something about these martyrs from an early Byzantine narrative entitled *A Report by Ammonius the Monk Concerning the Holy Fathers Slaughtered by the Barbarians at Mt Sinai and Raithou* (also known as the Ammonius Report, BHG 1300-1300b). This tells in gruesome detail how, in the fourth century, forty monks were killed at a monastery

near Raithou by Blemmyes (Nubian) pirates on the same day that forty died during a Saracen raid on four monastic colonies below Mount Sinai. Visitors to Saint Catherine's might presume that one of these two groups lies buried in this chapel.

Yet the inscription and its placement in the room pose some interesting historical puzzles. Clearly it refers to two separate groups of martyrs. The two groups are related numerically, but what was intended by the enigmatic abbreviation '4-ten' that defines the first – and apparently earlier – group? The room's dedication to the groups described in the Ammonius *Report* seems illuminating, but it may simply reflect a later guess by subsequent generations of monks at Saint Catherine's about the original identity of the unnamed groups commemorated by the slab. As we shall see, scholars have proposed other possibilities, while investigations undertaken in 1996 have revealed that, despite the inscription's emphatic statement that a group of martyrs 'lie[s] in this place', nothing actually lies behind the slab or anywhere else in the room. Indeed, the space was originally intended to serve as a sacristy when the basilica was built in the sixth century. Apparently it was converted into a chapel when the marble slab was set in its wall, but we do not know when that happened or whether the inscription was meant to be installed there or at some other location when it was originally carved in the late sixth or early seventh century. So instead of providing clear answers, the inscription prompts basic questions: who exactly were the martyrs in question and in what place did they originally lie?

Group martyrdom is central to the early monastic tradition of the Sinai Peninsula. Besides the Ammonius *Report* mentioned above, we possess a much longer and more elaborate martyr narrative entitled *Narrations by Nilus the Monk of the Slaughter of the Monks on Mt Sinai and the Captivity of His Son Theodulus* (Ps.-Nilus's *Narrations*, BHG 1301-1397b). Both narratives describe the slaughter

of different groups of monks by pagan Arab nomads in late antiquity. Both were written to edify readers, and after the Arab conquest both were assembled (together with Anastasius's *Tales of the Sinai Fathers*) by monks of Saint Catherine's to document early examples of Christian holiness on the peninsula. As noted above, the Ammonius *Report* tells how Saracen raiders killed forty monks on one day (28 December) in four areas around Mount Sinai, then how a similar attack occurred on the same day at Raithou, when pirates crossed the Red Sea and killed forty monks before being dispatched by local Christian Arab archers from Pharan. Each group was buried in the region where they died; though the narrative says nothing about the location of the Sinai burial, it notes that the Pharanites built a tomb for the Raithou dead near the scene of their slaughter. Ps.-Nilus's *Narrations* recounts how its unnamed narrator and his son were separated during a nomadic raid that occurred while they were visiting the monks of Mount Sinai on a Sunday, 14 January, resulting in the son's being captured to be sacrificed. While most of the narrative focuses on the father's efforts to save his son, it also describes the death of eight monks, names them, mentions their collective burial, notes the date, and adds that a much earlier group of Sinai martyrs came to be commemorated on that day as well, in order to accommodate all the people who travelled for the occasion from far away.

Thus ancient tradition presents at least three distinct groups of Sinai martyrs. As the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria observed, this remote corner of the Roman Empire was 'Saracen country'. Imperial cavalry patrolled the peninsula's Red Sea coast and central oasis town of Pharan, but Arab tribes consisting of sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists controlled most of the vast interior,

including the southern mountains and wadis where monks started settling in the fourth century. While some of these tribes converted to Christianity, many (perhaps most) did not: a pilgrim from Italy could still see a ceremony being conducted by a pagan priest around a sacred rock on the slopes of Mount Horeb in the late sixth century. If Christian relations with this indigenous population usually remained stable during the early Byzantine centuries, it is also clear that security for visitors and monastic colonizers on the Sinai Peninsula depended not only on imperial patrols but also on the good will of local sheikhs. When incentives for such good will broke down (as might happen when Arab and Roman interests came into conflict farther north), the possibility greatly increased that monks and pilgrims might be robbed, enslaved or murdered. The persistence of this threat, which Christian authors predominantly attribute to the paganism of local tribes, made the Sinai Peninsula different from other areas of the Byzantine Holy Land, and partly accounts for the emphasis on martyrdom in the region's monastic tradition.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that modern historians have a hard time accepting the martyr narratives of Ammonius or Ps.-Nilus as factual accounts. Ps.-Nilus's *Narrations* is patently modelled on Fourth Maccabees and conventions of Hellenistic romance, but the Ammonius *Report* is even more suspect. It purports to be a straightforward, eyewitness, fourth-century traveller's account that was later found in Egypt by a priest who translated it from Coptic into Greek. However, such claims of eyewitness testimony, chance discovery and subsequent translation are common to forgeries in antiquity. There are other reasons to doubt its historical credibility. Besides the sheer implausibility of its claim that an identical number



Chapel of the Holy Fathers Slaughtered at Sinai and Raithou.

of martyrdoms occurred in two different places on the Sinai on the exact same day, the sections on the Mount Sinai martyrs seem to have been based partly on accounts of a fourth-century Saracen uprising (the so-called Mavia revolt) recorded by fifth-century church historians, and much of its account of the death of the Raithou martyrs is patently derived from the fourth-century 'Forty Martyrs of Sebaste' tradition known from earlier church histories and hagiographies. Since, however, its Mount Sinai sections allude to a list of martyrs, we may assume that a liturgical list served as the source of information. We may therefore accept its claim that monks were killed in four separate places around Mount Sinai on 28 December during the tenure of a certain Peter as Bishop of Alexandria – probably referring to Peter II, who held that see c. 373-380, i.e. in the late fourth century.

So which of these groups does the inscription in Saint Catherine's Monastery commemorate? Who were the '4-ten' who suffered 'baptism by blood', and the 'equal-in-number Holy Fathers' who 'emulated' (or perhaps rivalled) them? Diverse explanations have turned on the unusual phrase, '4-ten' (ὁ δεκάδος). Ihor Ševčenko interpreted it as an abbreviation for either the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste or the Forty Martyrs of Rhaithou; he identifies the 'equal-in-number Holy Fathers' with Ammonius's Forty Martyrs of Mount Sinai. However, Philip Mayerson has argued that '4-ten' was an abbreviation not for 'forty' but for 'fourteenth', proposing the translation 'The Holy Fathers lie here, equal in number to those killed on the 14th [of January]'. Mayerson identifies 'those killed on the fourteenth' with the monks whose deaths Ps.-Nilus describes on 14 January, but he leaves open the identity of the 'Holy Fathers' who imitated them. Indeed, Mayerson proposes that the phrase 'equal in number' was left vague intentionally, due to uncertainty as to how many had actually died on 14 January. He therefore concludes that the inscription commemorated an unspecified number of Mount Sinai monks who were martyred some time later than Ps.-Nilus's group, but before the inscription was carved in the late sixth or seventh century. Pierre-Louis Gatier, on the other hand, notes that there is no attestation elsewhere for the use of the phrase '4-ten' to abbreviate a date. Like Ševčenko, he believes that this must mean 'forty'; however, he considers it sufficiently prominent and odd to have further significance. Gatier proposes that it refers to the number of Mount Sinai monks whom the Ammonius *Report* specifies as having died at four different sites around the mountain ('Gethrambi', 'Horeb', 'Kodar' and 'the vicinity of Mount Sinai'). He concludes that the 'equal-in-number Holy Fathers' who emulated them refers to the monks whose deaths Ps.-Nilus describes: 'Having zealously sought the baptism of blood of the four-fold ten [Ammonius's Mount Sinai martyrs], equal in number, the Holy Fathers [Ps.-Nilus's Sinai martyrs] rest here'.

Thus, according to these scholars, the inscription commemorates either Ammonius's Mount Sinai martyrs, who emulated the Forty Martyrs, either of Sebaste or of Rhaithou (Ševčenko), or some unknown number of later

Mount Sinai martyrs, who emulated Ps.-Nilus's martyrs of 14 January (Mayerson), or Ps.-Nilus's martyrs, who emulated Ammonius's Mount Sinai martyrs (Gatier). Is it possible to resolve this confusion of martyrs?

First, it seems most probable that the enigmatic phrase '4-ten' was merely an abbreviation for 'forty', devised to fit the inscription into two lines. (The Greek word for 'forty', τεσσαράκοντα, would have taken up twice the space. Moreover, why would the inscription describe one group of martyrs as 'equal in number' to the prior group if it had not already indicated the number of that prior group?) Second, it would be most economical to agree with Ševčenko (and later Sinai monastic tradition, as indicated by the room's designation) that the two groups in question were the two groups of forty described in the Ammonius *Report*, viz. the martyrs of Mount Sinai and of Rhaithou (pace Gatier, Ps.-Nilus says that eight monks died in the event he describes, so these are not 'equal in number' to Ammonius's forty Mount Sinai martyrs). Finally, the absence of any relics in the room might be explained by the entries for 12 November on Ps.-Nilus in the tenth-century *Synaxarion of Constantinople* and for 14 January on Ps.-Nilus's and Ammonius's Sinai martyrs. The 12 November entry states that Emperor Justin II (565-578) installed the remains of Ps.-Nilus, Theodulus and 'other ascetics' under the altar of a church of St Paul's in Constantinople, while the entry for 14 January conflates Ps.-Nilus's martyrs with those described by Ammonius. It has been inferred that these Sinai martyrs commemorated on 14 January should be identified with the 'other ascetics' mentioned in the entry of 12 November, and that Emperor Justin removed all their relics from the Sinai in order to sanctify his new church in the imperial city.

Yet the *Synaxarion* is not at all clear on this point, and questions persist: how, for example, should we explain the inscription's implication that the 'Holy Fathers' being commemorated had emulated a group of forty martyrs who apparently had died somewhat earlier, and certainly were buried elsewhere? The forty of Sebaste would fit those circumstances, but as Ihor Ševčenko observes, anyone who knew enough about them to recognize that they were the ones whom the inscription meant by the metonymic '4-ten' ('forty') would have also known that they died by freezing rather than a 'baptism of blood'. Is there any other way of explaining all these variables?

I believe there is, if we entertain the possibility that the Saint Catherine's inscription was originally meant to commemorate not Ammonius's Forty Martyrs of Mount Sinai, nor Ps.-Nilus's 14 January martyrs, nor any other group of unknown later Mount Sinai martyrs, but rather Ammonius's Forty Martyrs of Raithou. These, I propose, were the martyrs originally meant by the phrase 'having emulated the baptism by blood of the 4-ten', i.e. the Forty Martyrs of Mount Sinai. That no relics for these Raithou martyrs lie today in Saint Catherine's might be explained by the fact that they were never buried there in the first place, but were placed in the tomb that Ammonius says was constructed for them at Raithou. I further propose that

the inscribed marble slab was removed from that Raithou tomb and relocated for commemorative purposes to Saint Catherine's Monastery after Raithou was abandoned as a Christian centre in mediaeval times (see below), at which point the basilica sacristy was converted to this commemorative use.

Supporting this proposal are further reflections on some peculiarities of the Ammonius *Report*. I am persuaded that this narrative is a forgery of late sixth- or seventh-century date, and accordingly that it was written in more or less the same decades as the inscription – the late sixth or seventh century. But what would have been the purpose of such an act of forgery? As noted above, its author evidently derived his basic information regarding the Mount Sinai martyrs from a pre-existing list. Otherwise, he says very little that is specific about their identity or the circumstances of their death. Indeed, as Pierre-Louis Gatier has observed, its author seems far more interested in the martyrdom of the monks of Raithou, devoting more than two-thirds of his entire narrative to describing their location, sufferings, death and burial. In Gatier's view, the author was a Raithou monk who sought to raise the status of his monastery vis-à-vis the monastery below Mount Sinai by connecting Raithou's martyr tradition to that of the more famous institution. A number of peculiar features of the Saint Catherine's inscription – especially the assumption that its readers would understand its use of metonymy (suggesting local familiarity) and the reference to one group's emulation of an implicitly prior group – are resolved by this hypothesis, if we imagine that the marble slab was carved for the Raithou tomb in the same era when the Ammonius *Report* was written.

If true, this commemorative slab also represents the only tangible artifact to be preserved from the original 'sister' institution of Saint Catherine's, the less well-known early Byzantine monastery at Raithou. First securely documented in 536, this community evolved out of a cluster of anchoritic lavras into a fortified cenobium (Ammonius calls it 'the Fort') sometime in the fifth or sixth century. It should almost certainly be associated or identified with one of the two imperial fortress complexes whose foundations alongside the modern roads at Wadi al-Tur and Ras Raya ('Point Raithou') are now visible via Google Earth. We do not know exactly when these fortifications were built (a garbled Coptic source connects them to Emperor Anastasius, 491-518); unfortunately, excavations conducted there in the late twentieth century have never been adequately published. However, their scale, layout, and apsidal churches closely resemble what Justinian built in the sixth century below Mount Sinai, and could be used to understand what Saint Catherine's originally looked like before it received its mediaeval and early modern embellishments. The larger importance of the Raithou site arose from its protected inlets, which constituted the best natural harbours on the peninsula's western coast. This made Raithou not only strategically significant for control of the Red Sea, but also economically prosperous as a depot for pilgrims, building materials, food supplies and

other goods headed to Pharan and Mount Sinai, two days away in the interior. Sayings attributed to a sixth-century abbot of the Raithou monastery, John the Cilician, warn of the allure posed by worldly commerce in the area. Indeed, another anecdote from the same era mentions monks collecting pearls from the Red Sea, suggesting that this was their regular source of livelihood. The need to protect this industry from Red Sea pirates (like those described by Ammonius) no doubt also motivated secular officials to invest in fortifying the site.

The Raithou monastery maintained close spiritual relations with the Mount Sinai monastery (John Climacus wrote his *Ladder of Divine Ascent* for one of its abbots) and continued functioning until the eleventh century, by which time its port had become a transit site for pilgrims heading to Mecca as often as to Mount Sinai. As with Saint Catherine's, we know little about what happened to the monastery in the mediaeval era, except that the site was eventually abandoned and all of its monks and their remains were lost to memory – unless, of course, some of them are remembered in the early Byzantine martyr inscription at Saint Catherine's today.

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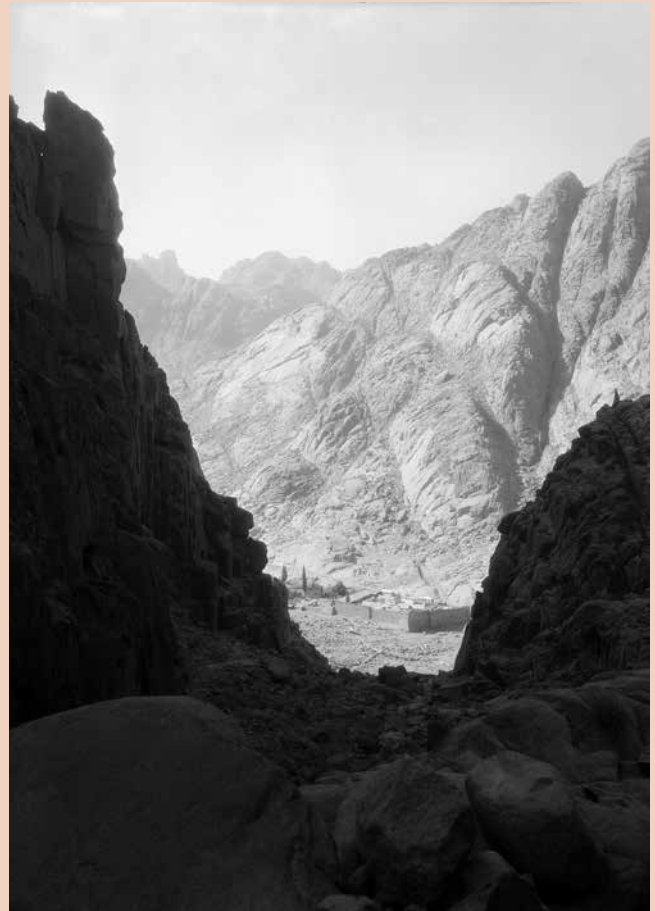
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Tempera and gold on panel, early 13th century, Sinai
Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai



Sinai. Panoramic view.
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*Actual size not shown
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