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# Classical Texts among the Palimpsests of the Monastery of St. Catherine (Sinai): An Overview

## INTRODUCTION

Most of the written cultural heritage of the Graeco-Roman world has reached us thanks to the diligent copying activity of Byzantine scribes, who continued to transmit works from classical antiquity in manuscripts. However, in a number of cases, classical texts in Greek and Latin, their translations into other languages, as well as texts in languages such as Syriac and Arabic inspired by Greek or Latin classical works, survive for the opposite reason; namely, as the result of the attempt to get rid of them. This is what happens in palimpsests. In this article, I will present the classical texts which have come to light in the erased layers of the palimpsests preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine located in the Sinai peninsula.

We are currently aware of 172 manuscript objects with individual shelfmarks which are entirely or partially copied on recycled parchment at St. Catherine's.[1] Their *scriptiones inferiores* were written in eleven different languages: Arabic, Armenian, Caucasian Albanian, Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA), Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, Greek, Latin, Old Church Slavonic, and Syriac.[2] Since the library of the Monastery comprises 4,549 shelfmarks (this count includes the manuscripts from both the Old Collection and the New Finds), this means that at least 3.7% of the total is palimpsest.[3] Out of these 172 palimpsests, 74 were imaged and studied during the Sinai Palimpsests Project of the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), with which I was affiliated as a Research Associate. As a result, a total of 307 'textual units' or 'UTOs' ('undertext objects')[4] have been identified in the erased layers of the 74 palimpsests. A textual unit or UTO was defined by the Sinai Palimpsests Project as a distinct work with the same layout, usually copied by the same scribe in the same time period and place, and preserved in a distinct manuscript object as defined by shelfmark.[5] A single textual unit does not necessarily correspond to one original manuscript: several textual units might be *membra disiecta* of one and the same 'original manuscript'.

The work of text and script identification was undertaken by a large international group of affiliated scholars who are experts in the relevant languages. The observations I will present in what follows are based on this collective work.[6] The images of the 74 palimpsests are free to access online.[7]

While the majority of the 307 textual units consist of Christian works (257 = 83.71%), a smaller percentage of known and unknown works from classical antiquity is also present. There are eleven of these in total (3.58%). Of the remaining erased undertexts, a small number are of documentary nature (4 = 1.3%), while a significant number of textual units are still unidentified (35 = 11.4%) (Fig. 1).

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[1] Last updated: 22.01.2021. This number does not include the over 100 palimpsest fragments from the fragments collection of the Monastery, which were surveyed and documented by Damianos Kasotakis from March to May 2020.

[2] On the language distribution among the overtexts and the undertexts, see Rapp, Secluded Place or Global Magnet? and Rapp's contribution to this volume.

[3] The exact total number of Sinai manuscripts was indicated to me by Father Justin Sinaites (personal communication, February 2021). See also Frøyshov, Les manuscrits de la bibliothèque du Sinaï, 61.

[4] The latter term was used during the Sinai Palimpsests Project.

[5] As far as the Sinai palimpsests are concerned, only in few cases was one textual unit or UTO copied by more than one hand. This happens for texts of documentary nature, such as those extant as *scriptiones inferiores* in Sin. ar. NF 8 (*Diktyon* 58318).

[6] The Appendix indicates the names of the scholars who identified the texts which I take into consideration in this article.

[7] The images are accessible, on registration, at the Sinai Palimpsests Project research site: http://sinaipalimpsests.org/ (accessed 01.07.2023).

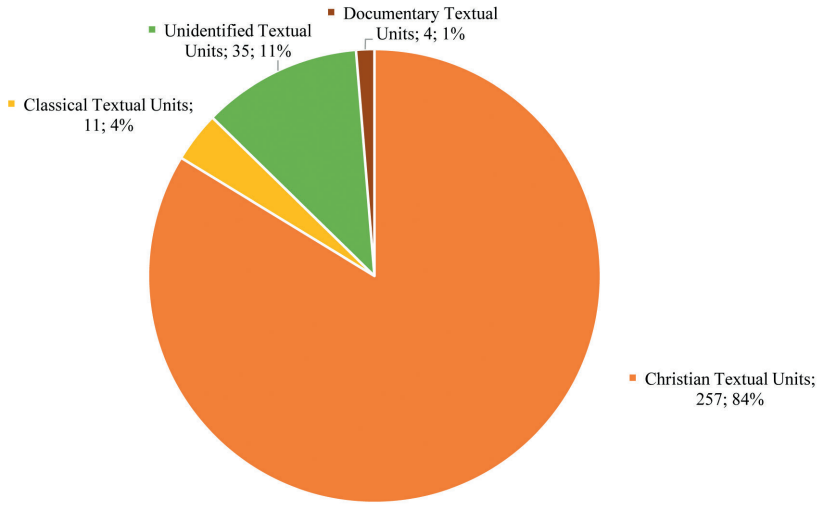



Fig. 1: Content of the 307 textual units preserved within the 74 palimpsest manuscripts which were imaged and studied during the Sinai Palimpsests Project

## CLASSICAL TEXTS AS *SCRIPTIONES INFERIORES*

Eleven classical texts have so far been identified among the Sinai palimpsests.[8] They are written in three different languages: seven in Greek, three in Syriac, and one in Latin. They appear in the erased layers of six extant manuscripts. Interestingly, as far as date of copying is concerned, they are clustered according to language (Fig. 2). All the Greek texts were copied around the 5th–6th century, the one text in Latin dates to the 7th century, and the three in Syriac to the 8th and 9th centuries. Seven texts are of medical or botanical nature, one preserves letters, one a fragment of a novel. In addition, there is a philosophical text, and the final text is of mythological nature. Eight out of these eleven (i.e. well over half) are completely new texts: they had either been unknown to scholars or—in the case of translations—had not previously been attested in a specific language (Fig. 3).

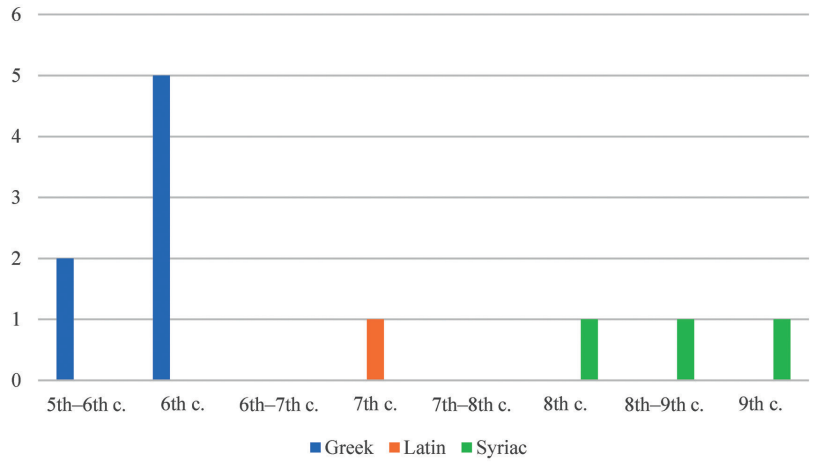



Fig. 2: Date of copying of the eleven classical texts preserved in the 74 palimpsests

[8] This number refers exclusively to the classical texts which were identified among the 74 palimpsests investigated during the Sinai Palimpsests Project. Once the entire collection of palimpsests preserved at St. Catherine's will be studied, the number of classical texts will very probably increase. Moreover, this number also does not include the classical texts in palimpsests that were originally preserved at St. Catherine's, but are now found in manuscripts collections around the world. An example is the Menander palimpsest (Vat. sir. 623 [*Diktyon* 69457]), now in the Vatican Library (on this discovery see D'Aiuto, Graeca in codici orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana). This manuscript was imaged by the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library in 2014: http://emel-library.org/projects-3/ (accessed 01.07.2023). Therefore, the number of preserved classical texts from Sinai would increase if we were to include the Sinai diaspora manuscripts.

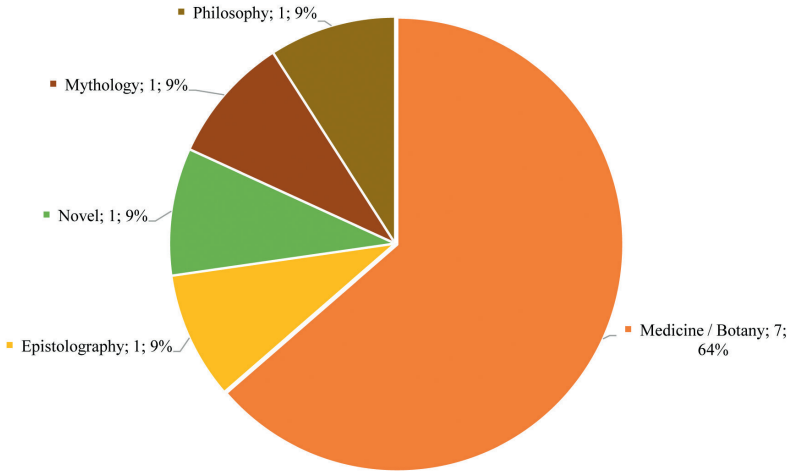



Fig. 3: Content of the eleven classical texts preserved within the 74 palimpsest manuscripts which were imaged and studied during the Sinai Palimpsests Project

I will consider each text individually, by language: first Greek, then Latin, and finally Syriac. I will not present any new text editions here, but rather offer an overview of each text, including codicological and palaeographical details. A schematic summary of all collected information for each text can be found in the Appendix at the end of the article.

## Classical Texts in Greek

From a total of 92 Greek textual units, seven classical texts were recovered as part of the Sinai Palimpsests Project. This represents 7.6% of the total.[9] They are clustered within the erased texts of two manuscripts: six are preserved in Sin. ar. NF 8 (*Diktyon* 58318), and one in Sin. ar. NF 66.[10]

Three of them are previously-known classical texts from the *corpus Hippocraticum*. These are found in ten folios of Sin. ar. NF 8 (ff. 8, 9, 40, 41, 46, 47, 50, 53, 58, 61).[11] The surviving passages come from the seventh book of the *Epidemics* (*De morbis popularibus*), from the first book of the *Regimen* (*De diaeta*), and from the *Letters* (*Epistulae*). In the folios containing the *Epidemics*, the *scriptio inferior* runs perpendicular to the *scriptio superior*. This means that one folio of the original manuscript was turned by 90° or 270°, folded in two, and reused as a new bifolio. The folios with passages from the *Letters* and the *Regimen* were also treated in the same way. However, in addition to this, the edges of the original folios were cut into strips and these strips were then sewn together. This is visible on ff. 8 and 9 (Fig. 4).

The texts of the *corpus Hippocraticum* are arranged in two columns of 42/43 lines (reconstructed number). They are written in Biblical majuscule, by two different hands. According to Agamemnon Tselikas and Nigel Wilson, the script dates to the 6th century.[12] In the table below, I list the preserved textual segments. This is followed by the reconstruction of the undertext folio order.[13] This reconstruction shows that all passages from the *Epidemics* originated from one single folio of the original medical manuscript. Also, the fragments

[9] For an overview of all the Greek Sinai palimpsests investigated during the Sinai Palimpsests Project see Rossetto, *Greek Palimpsests at Saint Catherine's Monastery*, 37–94.

[10] Reference catalogue entry for Sin. ar. NF 8 is Meimaris, *Κατάλογος*, 24. See also Boudalis and Rossetto, Colour Mapping of Sin. ar. NF 8. For Sin. ar. NF 66 the reference catalogue is Meimaris, *Κατάλογος*, 35.

[11] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Agamemnon Tselikas and Nigel Wilson, and further investigated from a codicological perspective by Giulia Rossetto.

[12] On the dating criteria for manuscripts copied in Greek majuscule letters, see Pasquale Orsini's contribution in this same volume, fn. 4.

[13] This reconstruction is my own, based on preliminary text identification by Agamemnon Tselikas. Passages are given on the basis of Littré's edition: Littré, *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*.

containing the *Letters* come from one single original folio, while those from the *Regimen* originate from two folios of the original manuscript. Thus, a total of four original folios from the *corpus Hippocraticum* have come down to us.



Fig. 4: Sin. ar. NF 8, f. 9r: Hippocrates, *Letters* 10,19–31 (ed. Littré) (top piece); Unidentified text (middle piece); Hippocrates, *Regimen* I 17,6 – 18,11 (ed. Littré) (bottom piece). Processed image by Keith Knox: KTK_pseudo_avgUV-VIS
(© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

| **Sin. ar. NF 8: Hippocrates, *Epidemics* VII 1,59.8 – VII 1,77.4** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Folio | Passage | *Incipit* | *Desinit* |
| 50r | VII 1,60.4 – 1,62.1 (col. a) | ] μετὰ τοὺς παροξυσμοὺς … | … Ἀλκμᾶνι ἐκ νεφριτικῶν […] [ |
| | VII 1,63.2 – 1,64.9 (col. b) | ] δὲ εἰρίῳ … | … ἐπιχέαντα ἐπ[αλείψαντα |
| 50v | VII 1,67.10 – 1,68.7 (col. a) | ] […] σιδίων· καὶ οὔρου … | … συνήνεγκεν ἀλλὰ σήσα[μον |
| | VII 1,73.1 – 1,77.4 (col. b) | ] […] σπάσματος ἢ πληγῆς … | … πνεῦμα πυκνὸν [ |
| 53r | VII 1,64.9 – 1,67.4 (col. a) | καταπλ]άσσειν ἐπὶ … | … κατέχειν ἠδύνατο οὐδὲ [ |
| | VII 1,68.7 – 1,72.2 (col. b) | σήσα]μον πίνειν καθαρὸν … | … κατὰ ῥῖνας χωρή[σῃ |
| 53v | VII 1,59.8 – 1,60.4 (col. a) | ] […] ῥηϊδίως πρῶτον … | … καὶ ὅταν λήγωσι [ |
| | VII 1,62.1 – 1,63.2 (col. b) | ] […] κάτω καὶ αἵματος … | … μὴ κλύζειν διακα[θαίρειν |
| Undertext folio order:<br>- original *recto*: 53v (col. a), 50r (col. a), 53v (col. b), 50r (col. b)<br>- original *verso*: 53r (col. a), 50v (col. a), 53r (col. b), 50v (col. b) | | | |

| **Sin. ar. NF 8: Hippocrates, *Regimen* I 17,6 – 30,11** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Folio | Passage | *Incipit* | *Desinit* |
| 8r bottom | I 25,9 – 26,3 | ἀ]νθρώπου … | … καὶ πρότερον οὐ[ |
| 8v bottom | I 18,11 – 20,1 | ] μιμέεται δια[γινώσκουσα … | … χρυσίον ἐργάζ[ονται |
| 9r bottom | I 17,6 – 18,11 | ἐόν]τα συμφέρει τ[ῇ φύσει … | … κρού]σματα ἐν μου[σικῇ |
| 9v bottom | I 24,13 – 25,9 | αὐτ]ὸν μὴ εἶναι τὸν … | … ψ]υχροῦ τοῦ σώ[ματος |
| 40r | I 28,11–21 (col. a) | ] ἄρσεν ἀποκριθῇ … | … τρόπον τῷ προ[τέρῳ |
| | I 29,5 – 30,1 (col. b) | αὐ]ταὶ ἦν δὲ τὸ μὲν ἀπὸ … | … ὅδε ὁ λόγος δηλώσει [ |
| 40v | I 26,3 – 27,2 (col. a) | οὐ]δὲν ἕτερον ἑτέρου … | … ὕδατος μᾶλλον ἀπὸ ψυ]χρῶν |
| | I 27,12 – 28,1 (col. b) | ἀ]σθενείην τοῦ πυρ[ὸς … | … καὶ τὸ θῆλυ [ |
| 41r | I 24,5–13 (col. a) | ] κρίνουσι ἕνα ἐξ ἁπάντων … | … λέγειν ἄλλα δὲ ποιέ[ειν |
| | I 25,9 – 26,3 (col. b) | σώ]ματος κατ[αναλίσκεται … | … πάν]τα καὶ αὔξετ[αι |
| 41v | I 18,11 – 20,1 (col. a) | Γλῶσ]σα μουσι[κὴν … | … κόπτουσι [ |
| | I 22,1 – 23,2 (col. b) | ] οὔτε πρώσω προχωρέει … | … σημεῖα ἀνθρωπίνης φωνῆς [ |
| 46r | I 17,6 – 18,11 (col. a) | ] φύσει. Μου[σικῆς … | … τὰ μὲν ἄνω [ |
| | I 20,1 – 22,1 (col. b) | ] πλύνουσι, τήκουσι πυρὶ … | … τὰ ὑγρὰ ξηραίνων. Κεραμέ[ες |
| 46v | I 23,2 – 24,4 (col. a) | ] δύναμις τὰ παροιχόμενα … | … πολλῶν ἀφροσύνης θε[ῶνται |
| | I 24,13 – 25,8 (col. b) | ποιέ]ειν καὶ τὸν αὐ[τὸν … | … κι]νήσιος κα[ |
| 47r | I 27,2–12 (col. a) | ψυ]χρῶν καὶ ὑγρῶν … | … συνιστάναι δι᾽ ἀ[σθενείην |
| | I 28,1–10 (col. b) | ] πρὸς ἄλληλα διότι … | … τῆς ἔπειτα. Ἦν δὲ [ |
| 47v | I 28,21 – 29,5 (col. a) | ] μειοῦται γίνονται … | … δὲ κόσμιαι δὲ καὶ αὐ[ταί |
| | I 30,2–11 (col. b) | γυναι]κὸς ἡ φύσις … | … ἀμφοτέροις ἄρσενα γεννᾶσθαι [ |
| Undertext folio order:<br>- original *recto*: 9r bottom+46r (col. a), 8v bottom+41v (col. a), 46r (col. b), 41v (col. b)<br>- original *verso*: 46v (col. a), 41r (col. a), 46v (col. b)+9v bottom, 41r (col. b)+8r bottom<br>- original *recto*: 40v (col. a), 47r (col. a), 40v (col. b), 47r (col. b)<br>- original *verso*: 40r (col. a), 47v (col. a), 40r (col. b), 47v (col. b) | | | |

| **Sin. ar. NF 8: Hippocrates, *Letters* 3 – 7, 9 – 10, 25** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Folio | Passage | *Incipit* | *Desinit* |
| 8r top | 3,1 – 4,4 | ] Βασιλεὺς βασ[ιλέων … | … ὑπάρ]χους κελεύων [ |
| 8v top | 10,6–18 | illegible | … τὴν ἀπειρίην [ |
| 9r top | 10,19–31 | ] τὸ χρῶμα … | illegible |
| 9v top | 4,4 – 6,3 | ] ὅσα βούλει διδόν[αι … | … χρυσοῦ πλέον δύν[αται |
| 58r | 3,1 – 4,4 (col. a) | ]ν μέγας Ἀρταξ[έρξης … | … σοι ἀργύριον καὶ [ |
| | 7,3 – 9,1 (col. b) | ] ἣν ἔπεμψας ἐπιστολὴν… | … ἀποκρίνασθαι τοῖς [ |
| 58v | 25,4–17 (col. a) | ] ὅτε δὲ καὶ λοιμοῦ … | … τῷ δήμῳ [ |
| | 10,6–18 (col. b) | νενόση]κεν, ὥστε φόβος … | … καὶ Δημοκρίτους [ |
| 61r | 25,17–23; 10,1–6 (col. a) | ] δημοσίᾳ καθάπερ Ἡρακλέα … | … σοφίης νενόση[κεν |
| | 10,19–31 (col. b) | συνδιεφθο]ρὼς τῇ γνώμῃ … | … θεραπεύσεις βουλ[ὴν |
| 61v | 4,4 – 6,3 (col. a) | ] καὶ πέμπειν … | … δύν[αται. Ἔρ̣ρωσο. |
| | 9,2–11; 25,1–4 (col. b) | οὔτ]ε Ἡρακλέους οὔτε … | … ἐνδέδεικται τοῖς Ἕλλησι [ |
| Undertext folio order:<br>- original *recto*: 8r top+58r (col. a), 9v top+61v (col. a), 58r (col. b), 61v (col. b)<br>- original *verso*: 58v (col. a), 61r (col. a), 58v (col. b)+8v top, 61r (col. b )+9r top | | | |

Since the oldest extant codices containing Hippocratic works date back to the late 9th–early 10th centuries, the Sinai palimpsested folios, even though fragmentary, are exceptionally important, since they predate these attestations by about four centuries.[14] Sections from all three Hippocratic works are extant in papyri from the 3rd century BCE onwards.[15] However, the passages that are readable in the Sinai folios from the *Epidemics* and the *Regimen* represent the very first direct attestation for those sections. The same can be said for the passages from *Letters* 7, 9, 10, 25, while for *Letters* 3–6 we have older attestations on papyri from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. IX 1184 = Brussels, Musées Royaux E 6010 Vo [LDAB 1291])[16] and from the Arsinoite Nome (Berlin, Staatliche Museen P. 21137 [LDAB 1296] + P. 6934 [LDAB 1296]), dating respectively to the 1st and to the 2nd century.

In addition to the above-mentioned passages from Hippocratic works, Sin. ar. NF 8 preserves two further medical texts in Greek whose script—a Biblical majuscule—could also date back to the 6th century. In contrast to the first three works, already discussed, these two works were both previously unknown.

The first of these two texts is found underneath six folios of Sin. ar. NF 8 (ff. 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55), corresponding to three folios of the original manuscript rotated through 90° or 270° and folded in two. It is a treatise on medical terms[17] and resembles the *Collection of Hippocratic Terms* by Erotianus, but it is not the same text.[18] A number of entries are preserved, beginning with the letters *alpha* and *kappa,* such as ἀνήκεστος (‘incurable’, f. 48r) and κραμβίον (‘decoction of cabbage’, f. 49v).

The second hitherto-unknown text contains recipes for different diseases.[19] This is preserved in nine folios of Sin. ar. NF 8 (ff. 7, stub 9, 42–45, 59, 60, 99). They originate from five folios of the original manuscript which were rotated through 90° or 270° and then folded in two. Nigel Wilson has suggested that this text could be a section from a lost work of the 2nd century physician Antyllus.[20] In the extant pieces, we can read recipes for treating boils, along with instructions on how to remove a polyp from the nose and how to remove a tumour.

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[14] Littré, *Œuvres complètes d’Hippocrate*, I, 511–539.

[15] On the papyri containing Hippocratic texts see: https://www.trismegistos.org/author/390 (accessed 01.07.2023).

[16] Trismegistos 60175 / LDAB 1291: www.trismegistos.org/text/60175 (accessed 01.07.2023).

[17] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Agamemnon Tselikas and Nigel Wilson, and further investigated from a codicological perspective by Giulia Rossetto.

[18] Nachmanson, *Erotiani vocum Hippocraticarum Collectio.*

[19] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Agamemnon Tselikas and Nigel Wilson, and further investigated from a codicological perspective by Giulia Rossetto.

[20] Weißenberger and Nutton, Antyllus.

It is possible, but not certain, that the three Hippocratic texts and the two new medical texts come from one and the same original codex. In fact, the dimensions of the original folios and the *mise en page* are consistent for all five recovered works. According to my reconstruction, the original codex measured 260 × 200 mm and each folio had two columns of text with 42/43 lines of writing each. However, the hand which copied in Biblical majuscule the folios from the *Regimen*, *Treatise on medical terms*, and *Recipes* was different from the hand that copied the folios from the *Epidemics* and *Letters*. This means either that the works originate from two codices of similar size, or that (at least) two different scribes worked together to assemble the same manuscript. A further hint suggesting that at least some of the preserved texts originally belonged together can be found in remnants from a later foliation (?) in Greek minuscule letters on f. 7r (containing the text of the *Recipes*) and on f. 54v (containing the *Treatise on medical terms*). The numbers were located at the centre of the lower margin of the original folio. F. 7r carries the number ρλ΄ (130), while f. 54v carries the number ρλθ΄ (139). This numbering must have been applied before Sin. ar. NF 8 was created, i.e. before the second half of the 9th century (Fig. 5).

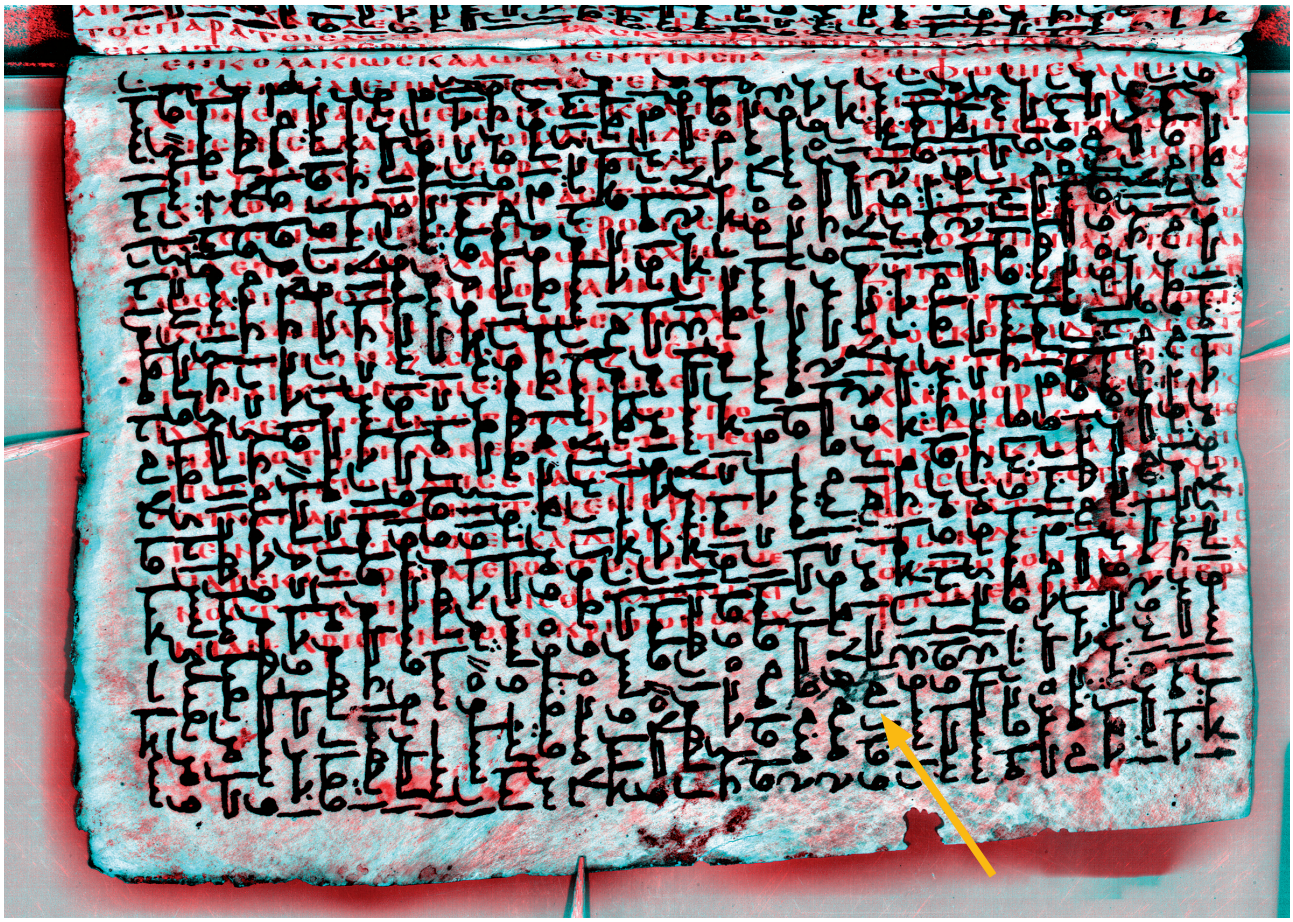


Fig. 5: Sin. ar. NF 8, f. 54v, foliation by later hand in Greek minuscule (ρλθ΄) in the centre of the lower margin of the original folio. Content of the undertext: *Treatise on medical terms.* Processed image by Keith Knox: KTK_pseudo_WBUVO22-MB780IR (© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

Sin. ar. NF 8 preserves one further previously-unknown text, namely one folio from a codex (now ff. 16 and 17 of Sin. ar. NF 8) that contained a botanical collection with images of plants.[21] It preserves the drawings of the plants Adianton and Phileterion, both accompanied by short captions written in a loose majuscule of small size from the 5th–6th centuries. When thinking of a botanical collection with illustrations, we are immediately reminded of the famous *Vienna Dioscorides* (Vind. med. gr. 1 [*Diktyon* 71026]), which also dates to the

[21] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Damianos Kasotakis and studied by Agamemnon Tselikas and Nigel Wilson. The text is partially transcribed in this volume by Damianos Kasotakis.

6th century. However, a comparison between the two texts shows that the wording in the Sinai folio does not correspond to Dioscorides. According to Nigel Wilson, it is tempting to think that the text preserved on this folio was composed by the physician Crateuas, since Crateuas is known to have been the author of the only illustrated herbal prior to Dioscorides.[22]

The final Greek classical text among the Sinai palimpsests so far studied by the Sinai Palimpsests Project is preserved in two folios and two fragments of Sin. ar. NF 66, namely f. 2 + frg. 7 + frg. 8 and f. 6 (Fig. 6). It contains a previously-unknown mythological poem with Orphic content in hexameters, written in a peculiar 5th–6th century bimodular Alexandrian majuscule and quite probably copied in Egypt (perhaps in Alexandria).[23] This text originates from a large luxury codex (300 × 250 mm) with 30 lines per page arranged in one column. The extant passages mention a number of Greek deities and mythological figures, such as Dionysus, Zeus, and Persephone, and seem to relate the Orphic version of the myth of Dionysus, born from the union of Persephone and Zeus. Metrical and stylistic features show that this is not a Late Antique work inspired by Nonnus of Panopolis, but rather something more archaic. My hypothesis is that this may well be a fragment of the otherwise lost *Hieroi Logoi* in 24 Rhapsodies. Until now fragments of this work had been only known thanks to the indirect tradition, especially in the form of quotations by the Neoplatonists (Proclus, Damascius, Porphyry).[24]

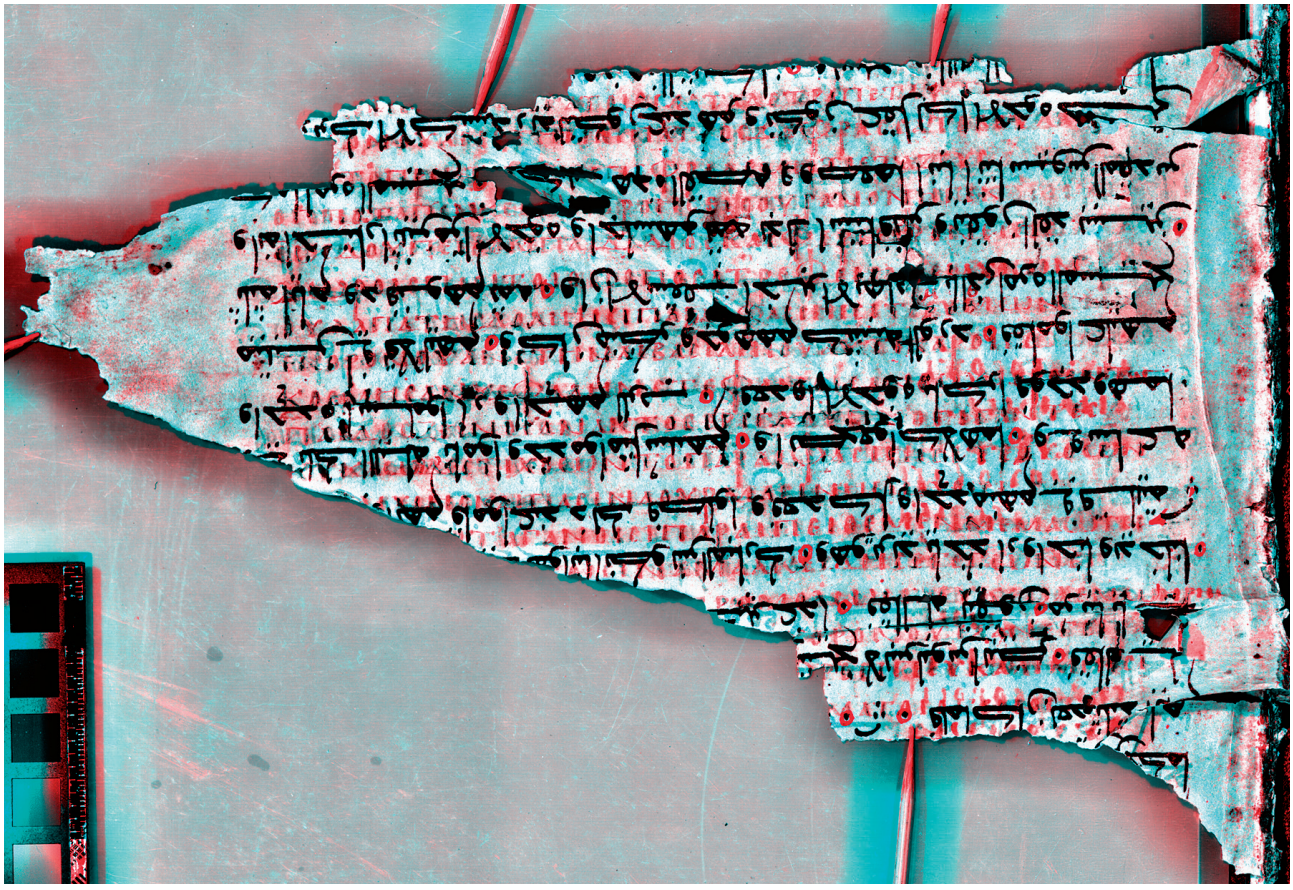


Fig. 6: Sin. ar. NF 66, f. 6v, mythological text in hexameters. Processed image by Keith Knox: KTK_pseudo_WBUVG58-MB780IR (© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

[22] Touwaide, Crateuas.

[23] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Giulia Rossetto. The *editio princeps* has been published in Rossetto, Fragments from the Orphic Rhapsodies? An updated edition can be found in Rossetto *et al.*, A Revised Text. On this same text see also Rossetto, "Library" and "Scriptorium", and Rossetto, *Greek Palimpsests at Saint Catherine's Monastery*, 47, 74, 266.

[24] West, *Orphic Poems*, 227ff., 256; Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 177.

## Classical Texts in Latin

Only one classical text in Latin has been identified among the Sinai palimpsests.[25] Since a total of six Latin textual units have been recovered within the Sinai palimpsests, this means that classical texts represent 16.7% of the total number of Latin textual units. This text is found among the erased textual units of the patchwork manuscript Sin. ar. NF 8.

This is a fragment of the 5th-6th century Latin translation from the anonymous Greek novella *History of Apollonius of Tyre (Historia Apollonii regis Tyri)*. It originates from a luxury codex and is extant on one segment of f. 18. Indeed, f. 18 is made up of three pieces sewn together, and the Latin classical text is found on the lower outer piece, which measures 95 × 85 mm. On f. 18r it is possible to recognize an illustration, while on f. 18v a text passage of ten incomplete lines is visible.

The fragmentary image on f. 18r (Fig. 8) depicts two individuals, probably a young woman and a man, set beneath an architectural entabulature with Corinthian capitals. The subject could be Apollonius and his daughter, Tharsia, at the house of the innkeeper Stranguillio. This is suggested not only by the text which is found on f. 18v (i.e. the middle section of chapter 28), but also by comparison with later illuminated manuscripts containing the *History of Apollonius of Tyre*, which have a similar scene of a man and woman standing in an architectural setting.[26]

On f. 18r, the text passage in *scriptio continua* is written in an uncial script 4 mm high; the space between the lines is 10 mm (Fig. 7). According to David Ganz, this Latin uncial should be dated prior to the year 650: it is of very fine quality, and could hail from Rome. The text passage corresponds to the *History of Apollonius of Tyre*, 28.6–12 (ed. Kortekaas).[27] In the table below I transcribe the text as it is legible in Sin. ar. NF 8, and compare it with the text published in Kortekaas' edition of the text (*recensio* A and *recensio* B).[28] The words that appear in both the palimpsest folio and in the two edited *recensiones* (RA and RB) appear in bold.

| **Sin. ar. NF 8, f. 18v** | **RA, 28.5–12 (ed. Kortekaas)** | **RB, 28.5–12 (ed. Kortekaas)** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 ]amissa coniugem reg[<br>2 ]tum accipere nolo[[29]<br>3 ]bertar cuius in mare p[<br>4 ]potius operam merca[<br>5 ]vobis filiam meam ut[<br>6 ]utriatur quam ut bono[<br>7 ]mo suscipiatis peto pat[<br>8 ]ognominauitis nome[<br>9 ]rea nutricem uxoris[<br>10 ].em cura sua custodit[ | Itaque, sanctissimi hospites, quoniam \|[6] ex **amissa coniuge reg**num, quod mihi servabatur, **nolo accipere**, sed \|[7] neque reverti ad socerum, **cuius in mar**i **p**erdidi filiam, sed **potius** \|[8] **opera mer-ca**t<ur>us, commendo **vobis filiam meam**: cum filia vestra \|[9] n**utriatur** et eam cum **bono** et simplici ani**mo suscipiatis** atque **pat**riae \|[10] nomine eam c**o-gnomin**etis Tharsiam. Praete**rea** et **nutricem uxoris** \|[11] meae, nomine Lycoridem, vobis commendo pariter et volo, ut filiam \|[12] meam nutriat atque **custodi**at. | Apollonius intuens Stranguillionem \|[6] et Dyonisiadem ait: Sanctissimi hospites, quoniam post **amissam coniugem** \|[7] caram mihi servatum regnum **accipere nolo**, neque ad socerum \|[8] reverti, **cuius in mare p**erdidi filiam, sed **potius opera merca**turus, \|[9] commendo **vobis filiam meam, ut** cum filia vestra Philotimiade n**utriatur**. \|[10] **Quam bono** et simplici ani**mo suscipiatis et pat**riae vestrae nomine \|[11] c**ognominetis** Tharsia. Praete**rea nutricem uxoris** meae Lycoridem, \|[12] quae **cura sua custodi**at puellam, vobis relinquo. |

[25] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by David Ganz and further studied by Daniela Mairhofer, Michelle Brown, and András Németh. Besides Michelle Brown's contribution in the present volume, she has discussed this text in the following articles: Brown, The Bridge in the Desert; Brown, Were Early Medieval Picture Cycles Recycled from Late Antiquity? In April 2021, a workshop titled 'The Early Illustrated Apollonius of Tyre' on this specific fragment was organized by Michelle Brown and Jessica Lockhart: https://booksilkroadsapollonius.artsci.utoronto.ca/ (accessed 01.07.2023). The proceedings of the conference are forthcoming.

[26] A comparison can be established with the so-called *Apollonius Pictus* manuscript, Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Lat. 4, f. 3v. See: Brown, Were Early Medieval Picture Cycles Recycled from Late Antiquity?, 5 (Fig. 1.1), 10. On the illuminated manuscripts of the *History of Apollonius of Tyre* see also: Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*; Boreczky, Illustrated Life of Apollonius and Tarsia; Boreczky, *Apollonius pictus* Reevaluated; Boreczky and Németh (eds.), *Apollonius Pictus*.

[27] Kortekaas, *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*, 169 (28.6–12).

[28] The transcription is my own. I thank David Ganz, Daniela Mairhofer, and Clemens Weidmann for their feedback.

[29] Between *accipere* and *nolo*, there is a spatium of ca. three uncial letters. There are no traces of erasure nor is there a flaw in the parchment. *Accipere* appears to be followed by an insertion mark in the ink of the text. Below the spatium, there is a smudge.

As already mentioned, text editions are not the goal of this contribution. However, it can be noted that, although the text in Sin. ar. NF 8 differs in some extent from RA and RB, it would seem to be a little closer to the *recensio* B of the *History* defined by Kortekaas as 'the shorter, more logical and down to earth one'.[30] But generally, the presence of textual variants is to be expected, since the Sinai fragments predate by at least two centuries our oldest witnesses of the *History of Apollonius of Tyre*. In fact, before this discovery in the Sinai, the oldest direct attestations of the novella were known to be in manuscripts dating to the mid-9th century.[31] Moreover, the presence of the drawing makes this piece one of the earliest attestations of non-Christian subject in a Latin manuscript.

This small piece of parchment is double palimpsest (*bis rescriptus*), giving further insights into its history of reuse. The illustration and the text passage from the novella were overwritten for the first time during the 7th–8th century, after rotating them through 180°, in a Latin half-uncial, with the Athanasian creed.[32] According to Michelle Brown, this hand could be of western or Sinaitic origin.[33]

Later, the Latin novella and the 7th–8th-century Latin text above it were erased, the pieces stitched together with pieces of different provenance, and a new overtext (Gospels in Arabic) was applied by a Christian Arabic scribe, resulting in the patchwork manuscript in the current form: Sin. ar. NF 8.



Fig. 7: Sin. ar. NF 8, f. 18v: *History of Apollonius of Tyre*, 28.6–12 (ed. Kortekaas) on the lower outer piece of three pieces sewn together. Processed image by Keith Knox: KTK_pseudo_WBUVUVb-MB780IR (© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

[30] Kortekaas, *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*, 3.
[31] Kortekaas, *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*, 100–101; Boreczky and Németh, *Apollonius Pictus*.
[32] This text has been identified by András Németh in April 2021, during the workshop 'The Early Illustrated Apollonius of Tyre'.
[33] Brown, Were Early Medieval Picture Cycles Recycled from Late Antiquity?, 10.

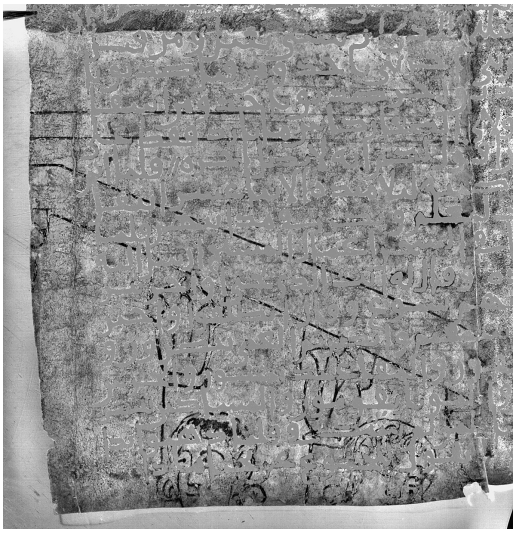


Fig. 8: Sin. ar. NF 8, f. 18r (detail): *History of Apollonius of Tyre*, illustration from chapter 28. Apollonius and his daughter Tharsia at the house of Stranguillio. Processed image by Keith Knox: KTK_sharpie_avgUV-MB780IR
(© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

## Classical Texts in Syriac

The classical texts in Syriac are translations or adaptations of Greek works, or original works that draw on Greek cultural history. They are three in total, out of the 91 textual units in Syriac which were identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project. This means that the classical texts comprise 3.3% of the total of erased Syriac material.

The first text, which was copied in the 8th century, is a philosophical treatise on the four elements, which mentions various names of Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle and the Pre-Socratics.[34] This text, written in medial Estrangela, is extant as the *scriptio inferior* of the two folios which form Sin. ar. NF 68 (ff. 1, 2).[35] The *scriptio inferior*, in one column of 27–28 lines, runs parallel to the *scriptio superior*.

Next, we find a herbal that is closely related to the Greek pharmacological tradition. It shows some similarities with Dioscorides' *De materia medica* and recipes preserved in the *Syriac Book of Medicines*.[36] Plant names are indicated in both Greek and Syriac. This is one of several undertexts of manuscript Sin. ar. 514 (*Diktyon* 58317).[37] This textual unit is found on six folios (ff. 1a–1b, 3–4, 7–8) and is written in an 8th–9th-century medial Estrangela. Each folio contained 22–26 lines of text, arranged in one column. The herbal runs parallel to the *scriptio superior* and represents the middle text layer of a double palimpsest. In fact, it was copied on top of three further Syriac erased texts of Biblical nature (fragments from Ephesians, Thessalonians and Timothy, all copied during the 6th century), which form the lower erased layer.[38]

Finally, one folio—copied in the first half of the 9th century in Serto—contains the translation of Galen's main pharmacological treatise, *On simple drugs*.[39] This constitutes Sin. syr. NF frg. 65 (Fig. 9).[40] The *scriptio inferior* of this folio runs perpendicular to the *scriptio superior*. The text is arranged in two columns, of ca. 33 (reconstructed) lines.[41] The codex to which Sin. syr. NF frg. 65 originally belonged is now held by a private collector in the United States and an additional number of folios from that manuscript are scattered among

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[34] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Paul Géhin.

[35] Meimaris, *Κατάλογος*, 35.

[36] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Grigory Kessel, see his contribution in this volume.

[37] Gibson, *Catalogue of the Arabic MSS*, 102; Atiya, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 19; Atiya, Arabic Palimpsests of Mount Sinai, 115–119; Atiya, Codex Arabicus.

[38] These are texts numbers 11, 13, 14 in Kessel's contribution in this volume.

[39] This text was identified during the Sinai Palimpsests Project by Grigory Kessel. In particular, the Sinai folio contains the following passages: f. 1r, XI 685–488 (ed. Kühn); f. 1v, XI 683–685 (ed. Kühn). See also Afif *et al.*, Syriac Galen Palimpsest, 138.

[40] Brock, *Catalogue of Syriac fragments*, 63–64.

[41] Afif *et al.*, Syriac Galen Palimpsest, 149.

different locations, such the Vatican Library, the National Library of France, and Harvard University Library (BnF syr. 382, f. 10; Houghton Library, syr. 172; Vat. sir. 623, f. 227 [*Diktyon* 69457]; Vat. sir. 647, ff. 38–39). Together, they form the so-called *Syriac Galen Palimpsest*.[42] This medical manuscript was probably produced in northern Mesopotamia or western Syria.[43]



Fig. 9: Sin. syr. NF frg. 65, f. 1r containing Galen, *On simple drugs* XI 685–688 (ed. Kühn). Processed image by Roger L. Easton, Jr. and David Kelbe: bands01-23_RF+FL_cal_bands_01+02+17-23_undertext_only_ICA_R_ratio2-1_G7_B7 (© St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

## PATTERNS OF PARCHMENT REUSE

The parchment folios containing classical texts which are preserved in St. Catherine's collection of palimpsests were reused in two main ways. In the first case scenario, the original bifolios were kept and reused as such, rotated through 0° or 180°. This is the case for the classical works in Sin. ar. 514 (Syriac undertext), Sin. ar. NF 66 (Greek undertext), and Sin. ar. NF 68 (Syriac undertext). In the second method of recycling, the original bifolios were cut in two and each folio was then rotated through 90° or 270°, folded in two, and reused as new bifolio. This is the case for Sin. syr. NF frg. 65 (Syriac undertext) and for all Greek undertexts of Sin. ar. NF 8.[44] Sin. syr. NF frg. 65 and Sin. ar. NF 8 are smaller in size than Sin. ar. 514, Sin. ar. NF 66 and Sin. ar. NF 68.[45] This seems to show that different methods of reuse are not specific to different language cultures. As it is

[42] Afif *et al.*, Continuing Research on the Syriac Galen Palimpsest; Afif *et al.*, Syriac Galen Palimpsest; Bhayro *et al.*, Collaborative research; Bhayro *et al.*, Syriac Galen palimpsest; Hawley, More identifications of the Syriac Galen palimpsest; Kessel, Membra disjecta sinaitica I; Kessel, Membra disjecta sinaitica II.

[43] Afif *et al.*, Syriac Galen Palimpsest, 112, 153.

[44] Sin. ar. NF 8 also contains among its undertexts the classical text in Latin. However, the fact that the original folio with the Latin text was cut into small pieces and sewn together with fragments from other manuscripts in order to make one folio of the new Arabic manuscript does not allow its inclusion in this kind of analysis.

[45] These are the dimensions (from the largest to the smallest): Sin. ar. NF 66 (290 × 240 mm), Sin. ar. 514 (223 × 150 mm), Sin. ar. NF

often the case, the resulting smaller or mid-sized codices were mostly used for liturgical manuscripts, such as *Euchologia*.[46]

The eleven classical texts are preserved as the *scriptiones inferiores* of five manuscript objects (shelfmarks) of the Sinai collection. The upper texts of four are written in Arabic (Sin. ar. 514, Sin. ar. NF 8, Sin. ar. NF 66, Sin. ar. NF 68), while one is in Syriac (Sin. syr. NF frg. 65). In addition, the folio of Sin. ar. NF 8 containing the Latin classical text is double palimpsest, the Latin work being the lowest layer. This means that the fragments from the novel were overwritten twice: the first time in Latin and the second time in Arabic.

All five shelfmarks contain Christian texts: two are liturgical (one *Euchologion* and one *Oktoechos* for the ordinary days),[47] two are hagiographical,[48] and one contains the Gospels.[49] The four Arabic manuscripts were copied between the 9th and the 10th century, while the Syriac manuscript dates to the 11th–12th century. The place where these manuscripts were copied is known in most of the cases: Sin. ar. 514 and Sin. ar. NF 8 were copied in the Sinai or in Palestine, Sin. ar. NF 66 at the Monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem, and Sin. syr. NF frg. 65, possibly, at the Black Mountain near Antioch.

For assembling these manuscripts the scribes most probably had at their disposal a pile of mixed sheets of parchment. This is clearly demonstrable for two manuscripts, namely Sin. ar. 514 and Sin. ar. NF 8. In fact, Sin. ar. 514 was written on top of erased parchment folios originating from a number of original manuscripts containing one or more textual units, in various languages. So far, a total of 29 textual units have been identified underneath Sin. ar. 514. These are scattered throughout the manuscript in random order.[50] Similarly, a total of 33 textual units in different languages have been identified underneath Sin. ar. NF 8. This second case is particularly significant, since Sin. ar. NF 8 is a real patchwork, whose individual folios are made up of several uneven pieces of parchment from different manuscripts sewn together: it is therefore likely that erased folios (probably already damaged) originating from several manuscripts were piled up in a random order, and pieces were cut out from these mixed folios and then sewn together.

It is important to note once again that several textual units could belong to one and the same original manuscript, and therefore it must be assumed that the original manuscripts which were reused in order to assemble Sin. ar. 514 and Sin. ar. NF 8 were considerably less than 29 and 33. For instance—as we have seen above—five of the seven Greek classical textual units from Sin. ar. NF 8 (Hippocrates, *Regimen*; Hippocrates, *Epidemics*; Hippocrates, *Letters*; *Treatise on medical terms*; Antyllus [?], *Recipes for different diseases*) probably belonged to the same original manuscript.

## DATE AND ORIGIN OF THE ERASED PARCHMENT SHEETS

For none of the cases presented here it is possible to establish exactly when a classical text was erased. However, the combined study of the *scriptiones inferiores* and *superiores* allows some speculation about the chronological gap between them. This extends from a minimum of 50–100 years (Sin. ar. 514) to a maximum of 400 years (Sin. ar. NF 8), the average being 250 years. In the case of the shortest gap, this occurs in a manuscript where the *scriptio superior* is in Arabic and the *scriptio inferior* is in Syriac, while the longest gap (approximately 400 years) applies to all seven Greek classical texts written between the 5th and the 6th centuries with the *scriptio superior* in Arabic of the second half of the 9th century.

It is reasonable to think that in these time spans the original manuscripts might have changed owners and locations. In fact, the places where the *scriptiones superiores* were applied often differ from those in which the *scriptiones inferiores* originate. We do not know whether the sheets containing the classical works travelled in the form of complete codices or as erased folios ready to be overwritten. Nevertheless, in three instances we can (partially) reconstruct the manuscripts' journeys.

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68 (210 × 128 mm), Sin. ar. NF 8 (183 × 128 mm), Sin. syr. NF frg. 65 (175 × 120 mm).

46 More about this in Rapp *et al.*, Byzantine Prayer Books, 183–191 (a section by G. Rossetto, Codicological Pathways in Search of Euchologia Palimpsest Manuscripts).

47 Sin. ar. NF 68, Sin. syr. NF frg. 65.

48 Sin. ar. 514, Sin. ar. NF 66.

49 Sin. ar. NF 8.

50 See the contribution of Grigory Kessel in this volume.

The Latin fragment from the *History of Apollonius of Tyre* that lies underneath Sin. ar. NF 8 was probably written in Rome before 650. During the 7th–8th century it was overwritten in Latin with the Athanasian creed, and later—in the second half of the 9th century—it was rewritten in Arabic with Gospels, in Palestine or in the Sinai. This implies a long journey, from west to east. A further undertext of Sin. ar. NF 8, this time of documentary nature and identified by Alexander Treiger, is an Arabic sales deed that hails from Ramla, Palestine (south of modern Tel Aviv) and dates to the year 841, which sets the *terminus post quem* for the dating of the *scriptio superior*. This does not imply that the Latin text necessarily reached Ramla or that the overtext of Sin. ar. NF 8 was written in Ramla, but helps to illustrate the complexity in the movement of parchment before all these texts finally reached the Monastery of St. Catherine as part of the same codex.

In the other two cases, the parchments do not seem to have travelled as far as in the first example. The *scriptio inferior* of Sin. syr. NF frg. 65, namely the Syriac translation of Galen's *On simple drugs*, was copied in northern Mesopotamia or western Syria in the first half of 9th century, while the liturgical book (*Oktoechos*) that substituted it was copied, possibly, at the Black Mountain near Antioch in the 11th–12th century. As a note in Arabic indicates, this book was donated to the Monastery of St. Catherine in the 12th or in the 13th century.[51] In this case the parchment sheets travelled from northeast to southwest.

The final example is represented by Sin. ar. NF 66. The Greek mythological text that lies erased under the Arabic writing was copied in Egypt, probably in Alexandria, in the 5th–6th century, while the overtext was certainly copied at the Monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem some time between 903 and 925. Once more, the parchment folios travelled, this time from southwest to northeast, but remained—as in the previous case—in a nearby region.

## WHY WERE CLASSICAL TEXTS DISCARDED?

As we have seen by analysing each classical texts in detail, in all cases except one (Sin. syr. NF frg. 65) the language of the *scriptio superior* differs from that of the classical erased texts. It can therefore be supposed that the language that is now in the undertext was not understood in the new environment where the parchments sheets landed.

It is also significant that we do not find any Greek work that overwrites a Greek classical text, even though this might be just chance. Moreover, all the Greek classical texts that have been identified within the Sinai palimpsests are written in majuscule, a script that was largely abandoned as a consequence of the *metacharakterismos* (around the 9th century), and replaced by minuscule. The Arabic codices that overwrite the Greek classical texts date to precisely this period (9th century). In this instance, it is not possible to prove that there is a connection between the two events, namely between the transliteration of Greek texts from majuscule into minuscule and the substitution of Greek classical texts in majuscule with Arabic works.

It seems reasonable to suppose that these texts were discarded, at least in the case of those in Greek, because of the different language, the kind of script that was hard to read (it should be recalled that the Greek texts in majuscule were written in *scriptio continua* and lacking diacritics) and because of the distance in time between overtext and undertext (a maximum of 400 years), during which the original codices might have suffered damage.

[51] Afif *et al.*, Syriac Galen Palimpsest, 114.

## APPENDIX: CLASSICAL TEXTS AMONG THE SINAI PALIMPSESTS

| ***Scriptio Superior*** | ***Scriptiones Inferiores*** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Shelfmark, Content, Origin, Date** | **Work** | **Language** | **Date and Origin** | **Identified by** |
| Sin. ar. 514<br>Hagiographica<br>(Sinai?, early 10th c.) | Anonymous, *Herbal* | Syriac | 8th–9th c. | Grigory Kessel |
| Sin. ar. NF 66<br>Saints' Lives<br>(Mar Saba, 903–925) | Anonymous, *Mythological poem* | Greek | 5th–6th c. (Alexandria?) | Giulia Rossetto |
| Sin. ar. NF 68<br>Euchologion (10th c.) | Anonymous, *Philosophical treatise on the four elements* | Syriac | 8th c. | Paul Géhin |
| Sin. ar. NF 8<br>Gospels (Palestine or Sinai, 2nd half 9th c.) | Hippocrates, *Regimen I* | Greek | 6th c. | Agamemnon Tselikas<br>Nigel Wilson<br>Giulia Rossetto |
| | Hippocrates, *Epidemics VII* | Greek | 6th c. | Agamemnon Tselikas<br>Nigel Wilson<br>Giulia Rossetto |
| | Hippocrates, *Letters* 3 – 7, 9 – 10, 25 | Greek | 6th c. | Agamemnon Tselikas<br>Nigel Wilson<br>Giulia Rossetto |
| | Crateuas (?), *Botanical collection with images of plants* | Greek | 5th–6th c. | Damianos Kasotakis<br>Nigel Wilson<br>Agamemnon Tselikas |
| | Anonymous, *Treatise on medical terms* | Greek | 6th c. | Nigel Wilson<br>Agamemnon Tselikas<br>Giulia Rossetto |
| | Antyllus (?), *Recipes for different diseases* | Greek | 6th c. | Nigel Wilson<br>Agamemnon Tselikas |
| | Anonymous, *History of Apollonius of Tyre* | Latin | Before 650 (Rome?) | David Ganz<br>Michelle Brown<br>Daniela Mairhofer |
| Sin. syr. NF frg. 65<br>Parakletike (Black Mountain near Antioch?, 11th–12th c.) | Galen, *On simple drugs* | Syriac | 1st half 9th c. (Syro-Mesopotamian region) | Grigory Kessel |

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