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Hamburg: COMSt 2015, 403–410
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Jost Gippert, Frankfurt 2015

3.11. Palimpsests of Caucasian provenance. Reflections on diplomatic editing (JG)

Palimpsests of Caucasian provenance

Of the three manuscript traditions that emerged with the conversion of the Southern Caucasus to Christianity by the end of the fourth century CE, that of the so-called Caucasian Albanians (cf. General introduction § 3.4) remained an outsider, given that it came to an end before the end of the first millennium while both Armenian and Georgian literacy have subsisted until the present day. There can be no doubt that the production of manuscripts developed very fast in the early centuries of literacy in all three languages; however, even for Armenian and Georgian, it is only the ninth century CE that provides us with the first dated codices. All older manuscript materials, with but very few exceptions (for example, the famous Georgian ‘Sinai lectionary’ codex, now Graz, UBG, 2058/1, which is likely to date from the seventh or eighth century, see General introduction § 3.8), are only preserved in fragmentary form, as flyleaves used in the binding of later codices (not necessarily of the same tradition), or overwritten (not necessarily in the same language) as palimpsests.

Since 2003, two international projects funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (Hanover) have focussed on palimpsests of Caucasian provenance, that is reinscribed codices whose underwriting was either Georgian, Armenian, or Caucasian Albanian, with a view to deciphering and editing the contents of the undertext and to establishing the basis for a palaeography of the ‘early centuries’ for the languages and scripts in question. The results of the work have been published in four volumes of the series *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi* (Sub-series *Ibero-Caucasica*) at Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, between 2007 and 2010 (Gippert et al. 2007a; Gippert et al. 2009; Gippert 2010a). In the case of the Caucasian-Albanian palimpsests, which were discovered in the underwriting of two Georgian codices from the ‘New Finds’ of St Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai, the edition provides the only manuscript material of the language in question that has come down to us at all, and the fact that neither the language itself nor the script used in writing it was known well enough before the palimpsests were investigated rendered the decipherment extremely difficult; had the texts not been identifiable as biblical, it would surely have failed. In the following pages, the peculiar tasks and methods applicable in editing palimpsest content will be outlined on the basis of the results of these projects.

General characteristics of palimpsests

The re-use of parchment leaves containing ‘older’ or ‘outdated’ content in the production of ‘new’ codices was by no means restricted to the Caucasian world but a characteristic feature of nearly all traditions that used parchment for manuscripts in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is decisive in this context that the ‘undertext’, i.e. the first written content of the leaves in question, played no role whatsoever for the person re-using the leaves, which is why more or less sophisticated methods were applied to erase the older text (by scraping and/or washing it off), and there are many cases where the language of the ‘underwriting’ is different from that of the upper layer. This is exactly what we find in the case of the Armenian and Caucasian-Albanian palimpsests of Mount Sinai (of approximately the seventh to ninth centuries CE), which were overwritten in Georgian (script and language) by a Georgian monk in about the eleventh century CE.

In general, it is not only the fact that the underwriting has been erased which makes the decipherment of palimpsests a tedious task, but also the fact that the leaves were often clipped in order to match the page layout of the ‘new’ codex to be produced, with notable amounts of the original text being lost; the underwriting may thus abound in gaps that must be restored in re-establishing the content. Depending on the method applied in erasing the undertext, rubrics of the original manuscript (for example, lection titles in red colour) may have disappeared totally, thus bringing about further ‘seeming’ gaps in the text flow. In the case of the Sinai palimpsests, additional gaps have emerged from damage to the parchment leaves that was caused by the fire which led to their detection (among the ‘New Finds’) in 1975 (Gippert et al. 2009, I-1–2 as to details on the circumstances of the discovery of the ‘New Finds’). Frequently, the original leaves were turned 90° in being re-used as palimpsests; this may be advantageous for the decipherment as only parts of the letters were overwritten in this case, but it usually led to greater losses of text, especially in the margins. Lastly, palimpsest parchment leaves were often chosen ‘at random’ in the process of re-use, with the effect that the original sequence of folia was not maintained and leaves from different original codices were intermingled in the establishment of ‘new’ ones. As a matter of fact, palimpsests mostly contain but fragmentary pieces of the underlying codices and no ‘complete’ ones; for example, the

Georgian palimpsest codex of Vienna (ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2, see Gippert et al. 2007a, xviii–xix as to details) comprises fragments from at least fourteen different manuscripts of different ages (c. the sixth to tenth centuries CE).

Aims and methods of editing the underwritings of palimpsests

As was stated above, nearly all manuscript materials available for the ‘early’ centuries of literacy in the Caucasus (c. fifth to eighth centuries CE) are only preserved in palimpsest form, which makes the underwritings in question especially valuable for the history not only of the languages in question but also of the textual tradition of Christianity in general. As a matter of fact, the Caucasian traditions have proven to be highly conservative in the sense that they have preserved many otherwise lost ‘early’ texts or text versions. The decipherment, restoration and edition of the underwritings of Caucasian palimpsests is therefore a task of major importance. On the other hand, the very fact that the texts contained in the lower layer of palimpsests may be unique (this is especially true for the Caucasian-Albanian materials) made it necessary to conceive a combination of special editing techniques that reflect the different degrees of certainty achievable in the decipherment.

1. The ‘diplomatic’ approach

The scholarly traditions of both Armenians and Georgians have developed similar standards in the editing of ancient texts that have been preserved in manuscript form. Editions like those of the *Vita of Mesrop Maštoc* by the fifth-century historiographer Koriwn (Abelyan 1941) or of the Old Georgian Chronicle *Kartlis Cxovreba* (Qauxčišvili 1955–1959) establish a common text by assuming ‘leading’ manuscripts, deciding between variant readings, resolving abbreviations (suspensions and contractions) and alphabetic notations of numbers and hyphenations, emending scribal errors, storing more specific information on individual witnesses in apparatuses, adding chapter or paragraph numberings, and printing the texts in ‘normal’ text-flow with modern punctuation in modern scripts (sometimes even in an orthography adapted to modern usage as in the case of the vowel *u* of Georgian which in the majuscule script was written as a digraph <ow> but has been replaced by <u> in most modern editions). As far as the latter features are concerned, this practice is also met with in editions of individual manuscripts as in the case of the ninth-century Sinai *Mravaltavi* (Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 32-57-33+N89), which is the oldest dated Georgian manuscript (Šanize 1959; see General introduction § 3.8 and Gippert forthcoming for details of the codex in question), or the late tenth century codex of Šaṭberdi (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-1141; Gigineišvili – Giunašvili 1979). Unlike this, the edition of the undertexts of palimpsests requires a more ‘diplomatic’ approach, which has been adapted throughout in the editions discussed here. This approach has the following characteristics:

a) the undertext is represented in a facsimile-like manner facing the images of the respective manuscript page; this implies that

b) it is arranged line by line (and, where applicable, column by column) as found in the original, with marginal and interlinear glosses, indentations, superscriptions, subscriptions and the like retained and with line numbering added at the side of both the image and the edited text;

c) it is printed in the original script(s) used in the manuscript (majuscules and/or minuscules), in matching character sizes (retaining enlargements for initials and the like);

d) word spacing is represented as it occurs in the manuscripts—given that all Caucasian traditions used *scriptio continua* in the early centuries of their literacy, there are usually no spaces visible at all, at least in majuscule manuscripts;

e) abbreviations (suspensions and contractions) and alphabetic notations of numbers are retained as such, with the respective marks (usually bars above the elements in question) applied;

f) hyphenations, whether with or without specific marks, are retained;

g) punctuation marks are retained as such; and

h) struck-out letters and words are represented as they were first conceived, but with a special markup (outlining or light red colouring) to indicate their being struck out.

In order to distinguish different levels of readability (and, at the same time, certainty of the decipherment), a given passage, word, or letter is printed in different degrees of blackness, ranging from black (on a white background) for perfectly preserved items down to light grey (on a dark grey background) for hardly discernible ones. Passages or elements that have not been preserved (due to clipping or dam-

[illegible]

Fig. 3.3.11.1 Edition of John 5.17–24, from Gippert et al. 2009, V-22–23.

A100ra	O	E	A	K	P	G	R	U	S
Jo. 5, 17		But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux	bez baban isaumalirik betesa, va zual bezsa.	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux
Jo. 5, 18	1 (zow-(a)l) (ba)[a-z:] 2 (E) [t] [neš ixoy (be) s] (a-hē Vaca) (r) (owgon)	Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux	bez baban isaumalirik betesa, va zual bezsa.	И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux
Jo. 5, 19	3 [owp] a oow [x te sa at' n] 4 [sa] (d-b) a-a(n)ak(e)-o(e)n-[hē] 5 sa dex-al ičē e(-) (k) a- 6 -(a) [n] (a) [ke-oen-hē b] [(x) [Z] a[-ig]-(b) a- 7 -(a)nak(e-oe(n-hē) b[ow]) himself equal with (ičē) b[-] (ē) For the dead 8 If ow-(k)or-biyay-ne Y'n p(e)- 9 -(n) [o] (en ā s) [amēn] (a) [mēn owk] (a-z) 10 [v'] (as ni-kho-ka garen unto you, The Son i) s] (ow) [y'] 11 (biyesa) i) [ē] (ē biye) [xoc do nothing of himself, 12 -(a) [l]] (b) a(e) (n) (ke) n- aka-n-en e-o'ow the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 13 o de baa-[-] yake-oen :] (oen) 14 -baa-h'ke-oenp (o') o(m) ga(ren) e'(-) a doeth the Son likewise. 15 la' [men ba] (a)-anake-o(en) : For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.	But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux	bez baban isaumalirik betesa, va zual bezsa.	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux
Jo. 5, 20	16 [D] [e] (b) (w) (q) a(n) a- [ba] (a-an) [ake] (h) [r] [ax] 17 ex[] (hi) '[-] a(l) [b] (o) [ce] x(a-o-o) [n] 18 (oows i) [ē] (en) [baa-] (h) [ke]-(o) [en] 19 [bān] 'al him i xoy him 20 bicexa-o() (en) oow(s) xox[] (oc) [a] s(ox) 21 [v'] (a) [n] (a) [l] amec- ana-an[] (e-na) [n]	For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	but Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux	bez baban isaumalirik betesa, va zual bezsa.	Иисус же говорил им: Отец Мой доныне делает, и я делаю. И еще более искали на saya abuzqum funexai soxux
Jo. 5, 21									

Fig. 3.3.11.2 Synoptical arrangement of versions of John 5.17–20, Gippert et al. 2009, V-22.

5,17	<...> A100ra, zow-al baa-z :	<[Jesus replied to them, "my father has been working until now]", and I am working, too."
5,18	² E'f'neš ixoy besa-hē Vača'rowğon , owpa oowx te sa a'f'n , šad-ba-anaqe-oen-hē šanba'towx , sa dex-al ičē çieka-anaqe-oen-hē b'x za*ig-ba-anaqe-oen-hē bowl ičē b'ē	Therefore the Jews sought (even) more to kill him, not only because he used to break the sabbath but also (because) he used to call God his own father (and thus) to make himself equal to God.
5,19	⁸ Il'ow-kor-biyay-ne Y'n pē-n-oen ā's . amēn amēn owka-z ¹⁰ v'as . ni-kbo-ka ġaren išowy ¹¹ biyesa ičē biyexoc te hil'-al . haŋenke n-aka-n-en'e-o'ow ¹³ o de baa-yake-oen : oen A97va ¹⁴ <baa-h'ke-oen> o'om ġaren . e'q'a ¹⁵ la'men baa-anaqe-oen :	Jesus replied (and) said to them, "amen, amen, I say to you, the son of man can do nothing by himself if he does not see what <the father does; whatever> he <does>, the son does as well similar to that.
5,20	¹⁶ <De bowqana-baa-anaqe ġa\{r\}ax ¹⁷ cex hil'-al bicexa-oen ¹⁸ oows ičen baa-h'ke-oen ¹⁹ bân'i-al himi ixoy edğoxoc a'šrox ²⁰ bicexa-oen oows ²¹ v'an-al amec-aha-anke-nan	For the father loves the son, he shows him everything that he himself does; he shows him even greater works than these, so that you will be astonished, too.
5,21	A100rb, De harzes-baa-anke-oen pow'riā~x , own ġowy-baa-anke-oen , owhow-o'om ġaren bowqa-hanayā~rke-oow ġowy-baa-anke-oen :	For (just) as the Father raises the dead and revives them, even so the son revives whom he wants to.
5,22	⁶ Bow-en'e te haŋenke de b'aax-ba-en'e išov sa lowsow b'aax-biyesown dağē-n-oen ġaraax , ičē .	Or, not that the father would judge a man, but all judgement he has given to his son,
5,23	cexaran oŋan-biŋa-anaqe o ġaraax oŋan-biŋa-ha\çinke ¹¹ de{x : } ¹² Now-oŋan-biŋa-n-hanayolenke ¹³ o ġaraax now-oŋan-A97vb ¹⁴ ba-oen dex o he-baalox oya	so that all people should honour the son (just) as they honour the father. He who does not honour the son does not honour the father, his sender.

Fig. 3.3.11.3 'Editio minor' of John 5.17–23 from the Albanian Gospels, Gippert et al. 2009, III-5.

age) but can be restored with a certain probability are printed in white on a black background (with non-restorable characters being replaced by a rectangle-shaped placeholder, ▯).

The manuscript pages themselves are represented by monochrome images stemming from ultraviolet photographs or from the 'spectral cubes' (sets of multispectral images) assembled during the project, electronically enhanced so that the prominence of the overtext is reduced and the contrast between the undertext and the parchment is reinforced (see Gippert et al. 2007a, xxxii–xxxiv and Albrecht in General introduction § 2.3, as to the technical background of the procedures involved). The interplay of these rules is illustrated in fig. 3.3.11.1 showing a sample double page from the edition of the Albanian palimpsests containing John 5.17–23 (Gippert et al. 2009, V-22–23).

2. The 'semi-diplomatic' approach

In order to enable readers with less knowledge of the original scripts to perceive and comprehend the information gathered in the diplomatic rendering, the contents of every single page (or column) is represented a second time in a 'semi-diplomatic' way. This implies the following characteristics:

- a) the text is transcribed into the modern scripts (in the case of Armenian and Georgian) or Romanized (in the case of Albanian);
- b) it is again arranged line by line, but with no distinction of letter sizes; instead, capital letters (where applicable) are used to represent enlarged initials;
- c) marginal and interlinear glosses are marked in special ways (using italics or cursive variants);
- d) spaces and hyphens are inserted according to present-day usage;
- e) abbreviations are resolved whenever possible (in the case of Caucasian Albanian, the restoration of abbreviations was not possible for many words in question, the unabbreviated variant having remained unknown) but with the restored elements put in (round or curly) brackets;
- f) the different degrees of readability and restorations of lost text elements are marked by other types of brackets; however,
- g) digraphs and punctuation marks of the original script are still transcribed as such.

To facilitate the verification of the decipherment, the 'semi-diplomatic' rendering is contrasted in tabular form (line by line) with other relevant witnesses of the same text. In the case of the Albanian Gospel texts, these are Old Armenian, Old Georgian, Greek, Syriac, Russian, and Udi versions, the Udi language of the East Caucasus representing the modern successor of Caucasian Albanian (see Bežanov – Bežanov 1902 for the translation of the Gospels into Udi, which was based upon the Russian text); additionally, the English text of the King James Bible was collated. Fig. 3.3.11.2 illustrates this arrangement with the table showing John 5.17–20 (Gippert et al. 2009, V-22).

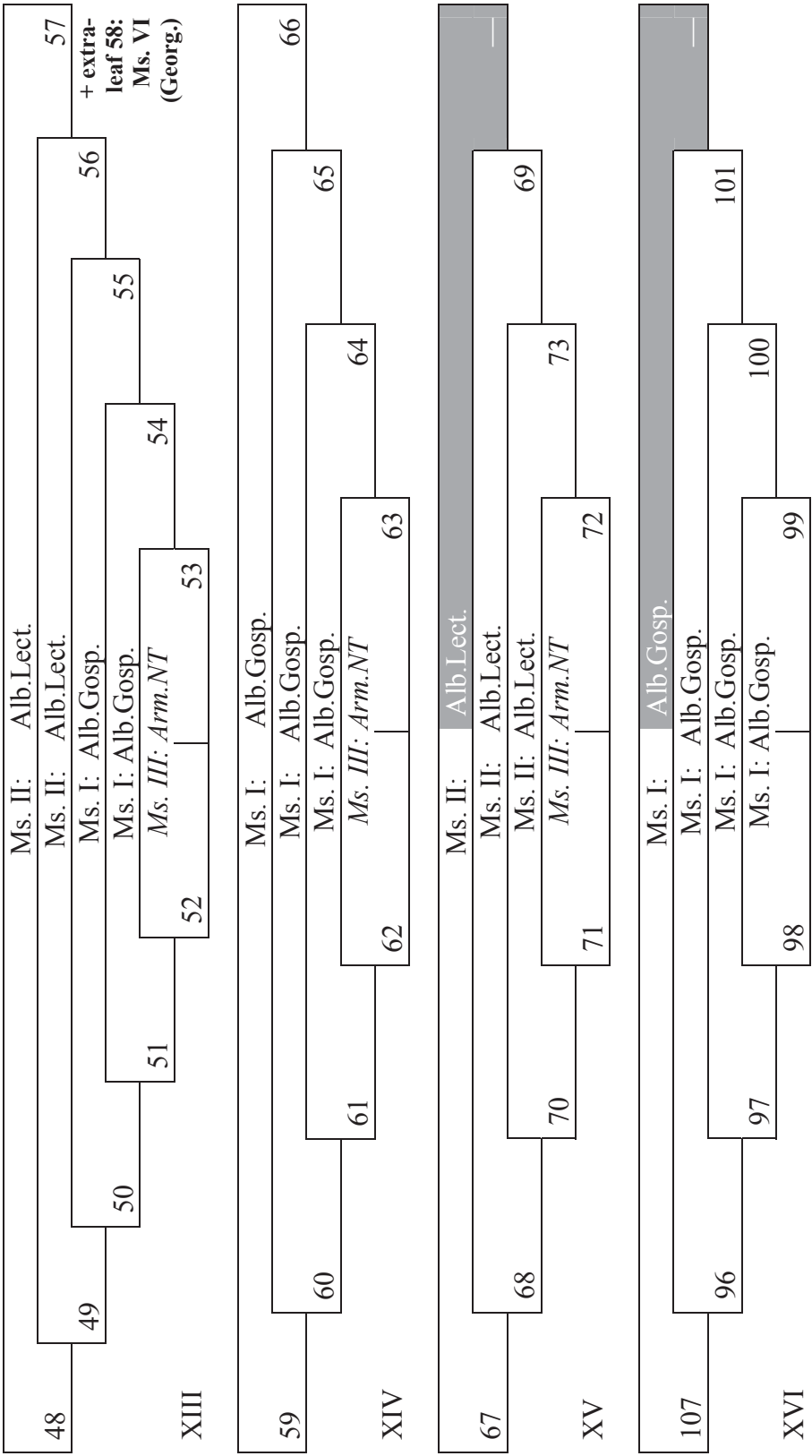


Fig. 3.3.11.4 Manuscript structure of the palimpsest codex Sinai, St Catherine, New Finds, georg. N13 (excerpt).

I	(Title)	1.1–25	(4.11–31)	8
	2 [A ₄₀₋₄₇]		3.27–4.11	
		(1.25–45)	(3.9–26)	[A ₄₁₋₄₆] 7
I	3	1.45–2.15	2.15–3.9	6
	4 [A ₆₋₁]		[A ₇₋₉] 5	
	4.31–48		6.66–7.17	[B ₇₋₂₂] 16
9 [B ₁₈₋₂₁]		(4.48–5.17)	(6.48–66)	15
10		5.17–35	6.27–48	[A ₉₉₋₉₈] 14
	11 [A ₁₀₀₋₉₇]	5.35–6.9	6.9–27	[A ₁₀₈₋₁₀₇] 13
II		12 [A ₁₀₁₋₉₆]		
	(7.17–37)		(10.7–27)	24
17		(7.37–8.14)	9.27–10.6	
	18	8.14–31	9.9–27	[A ₇₄₋₁₀₂] 23
	19 [A ₁₉₋₂₀]	8.32–50	8.51–9.9	[A ₁₈₋₂₂] 22
III		20 [A ₅₀₋₅₅]	[A ₅₁₋₅₄] 21	
	(10.27–11.7)		(13.11–28)	32
25		11.7–30	12.44–13.11	
	26 [A ₆₅₋₆₀]	11.30–47	12.26–44	[A ₆₆₋₅₉] 31
	27 [B ₁₋₅]	11.48–12.6	12.6–26	[B ₅₄₋₅₅] 30
IV		28 [B ₁₂₋₉]	[B ₁₁₋₁₀] 29	
	(13.28–14.7)		(17.25–18.16)	40
33		(14.7–24)	(17.6–25)	
	34	(14.24–15.13)	(16.22–17.6)	39
	35	15.13–16.5	16.5–22	38
V		36 [A ₃₀₋₂₅]	[A ₃₁₋₂₄] 37	
	18.16–31		21.15–25 + Col.	[B ₃₉₋₃₆] 48
41 [B ₄₀₋₃₅]		18.32–19.7	(20.30–21.15)	
	42 [A ₆₁₋₆₄]	19.7–22	20.15–29	47
	43 [A ₁₇₋₂₂]	19.23–38	19.38–20.14	[A ₁₆₋₂₃] 46
VI		44 [B ₁₃₋₈]	[B ₁₄₋₇] 45	

Fig. 3.3.11.5 Quire structure of the Gospel codex underlying MS Sinai, St Catherine, New Finds, georg. N13/N55.

3. *Editiones minores*

To further facilitate the reading of the re-established texts, the editions of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests and the Armenian undertext of the Georgian manuscripts Sinai, St Catherine, georg. N13 and N55 were further reassembled in a simplified version, together with an English translation. In this rendering, there is no indication of the degree of certainty of a given reading; however, amendments of unreadable or lost passages are marked with curled braces and angle brackets, respectively, in the Albanian and Armenian texts and with angle brackets throughout in the English translation. Passages that are restored in toto (on missing pages etc.) are printed in grey. Fig. 3.3.11.3 illustrates this ‘editio minor’ with John 5.17–23 from the Albanian Gospels (Gippert et al. 2009, III-5).

4. *Codicological information*

To facilitate the understanding of the complex distribution of original manuscript leaves (usually bifolia) over the quires of the ‘new’ codex, a special illustration technique has been developed as shown in fig. 3.3.11.4. Here, Roman numbers (XII–XV) indicate quires of the new codex, Arabic numbers (48–99), pages of the new codex (as established during the cataloguing, in some cases not reflecting the intended order represented in the diagram), and ‘Mss I–VI’, the different original codices the palimpsest leaves derive from. Fields with a grey-shaded background represent leaves that have not survived. In the case of the Albanian Gospel manuscript, it was possible to re-establish the quire structure of the original codex in toto, including the bifolia (represented by a grey-shaded background again) that have not been preserved in the palimpsest (Gippert 2012, 62; fig. 3.3.11.5).

Outlook

Even though the methods outlined above were developed for the edition of the undertexts of a few palimpsests of Caucasian provenance, they are likely to be applicable to other palimpsests, too, and several edition projects that will use them are underway right now. Depending on the readability of the given objects, the availability of flanking witnesses, and the needs and expectations of editors and readers, some of the methods may be regarded as superfluous or overstated. However, a diplomatic approach seems to be justified in any case.

References

Abelyan 1941; Bežanov – Bežanov 1902; Gigineišvili – Giunašvili 1979; Gippert 2010a, 2012; Gippert et al. 2007a, 2009; Qauxčišvili 1955–1959; Šanize 1959.