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# Palimpsests from the Caucasus: Two Case Studies

**Abstract:** On the basis of two case studies, this paper illustrates the problems encountered in retrieving the content of palimpsests, which constitute the main type of written sources in the Christian languages of the Caucasus (Armenian and Georgian) from the first millennium of our era, and which are thus of utmost importance for a project devoted to the development of literacy in these languages. Using the example of the Georgian double palimpsest Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, it is shown how it is possible to identify a given text fragment by translating keywords into another language (here, Greek). In the case of the second example, the Armenian undertext of the Greek Gospel manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, supplément grec 1226, the focus is on determining the structure of the palimpsested codex, resulting in the postulation of a hitherto nearly undocumented type of a lectionary including saints' legends.

## 1 Introduction

The development of specific alphabetic scripts in the context of Christianisation in the early fifth century CE meant the beginning of literacy for three distinct ethnic groups in the Caucasus: Armenians, Georgians, and the so-called Caucasian Albanians. While the former two developed their written heritage steadily until the present day, the literacy of the 'Albanians' ended with the Arab conquest in about the eighth century, and only a few specimens of their language have survived, mostly in palimpsests detected in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> For Armenian and Georgian, too, only a limited number of original written artefacts have been preserved from the 'early' centuries, that is, the period between the fifth and tenth centuries CE, and most of these, too, only in the form of palimpsested manuscripts.

Over the last twenty years, considerable progress has been made in stock-taking, digitising, and analysing these materials, mostly facilitated by the development of imaging techniques that can enhance the readability of undertexts

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1 For the present state of knowledge on the Albanian palimpsests, see Gippert 2023a, 104–141.

which were washed out, scraped off, or otherwise erased before being overwritten in later times. Leaving aside a few early attempts to decipher palimpsests from the Caucasus with the naked eye,<sup>2</sup> the first results of the application of more sophisticated means – beginning with ultraviolet photography and continuing with multispectral imaging – were published in four volumes of the series *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi* in 2007–2010. These were, in fact, the first editions of palimpsests anywhere in the world based on multispectral images. The result of close cooperation among scholars from Europe and Georgia,<sup>3</sup> they comprise the oldest undertexts of the codex Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, georg. 2, an all-Georgian palimpsest stemming from Jerusalem that covers fragments from at least fourteen original manuscripts from c. the fifth to the tenth century in its lower layer,<sup>4</sup> as well as the two Georgian codices Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (hereafter: Sin.), georg. NF 13 and 55, the only manuscripts known until the present day with undertexts in Caucasian Albanian,<sup>5</sup> alongside an Armenian,<sup>6</sup> a Georgian,<sup>7</sup> and a Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) layer.<sup>8</sup> While the manuscript heritage of Caucasian Albanian has remained restricted to Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55, a great number of further palimpsests with Armenian or Georgian undertexts have meanwhile been detected. For Georgian, a special catalogue published in 2017 lists 124 items with a total of 10630 palimpsested pages that are stored at the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi (hereafter: KKNCM);<sup>9</sup> for Armenian, the existing catalogues of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts at Yerevan (hereafter: Matenadaran) indicate that at least 50 codices are palimpsests (at least partially), with more than 7500 pages concerned.<sup>10</sup> Beyond this, a large number of both Armenian and Georgian palimpsests have been located outside of the respective national repositories, in churches, monasteries,

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2 See Javakhishvili 1922–1923; Shanidze 1927; Blake 1932; Shanidze 1937; Kajaia 1984.

3 This cooperation was facilitated by the project *Neue Wege zur wissenschaftlichen Bearbeitung von Palimpsesthandschriften kaukasischer Provenienz*, kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation (2003–2008).

4 See the edition in Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007.

5 See the edition in Gippert et al. 2008.

6 See the edition in Gippert 2010.

7 See Gippert forthcoming a for details.

8 The CPA undertext of Sin. georg. NF 55, fols 19–20 was determined as pertaining to the Gospel of Mark by Alain Desreumaux s.a. See Christa Müller-Kessler's contribution to the present volume, pp. 148–149, for a different proposal.

9 Kajaia et al. 2017; see Outtier 2022 for additional information.

10 A preliminary list is provided in Gippert 2024.

libraries, and museums both within the Caucasus<sup>11</sup> and on Mount Sinai and Mount Athos, as well as in Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Special projects devoted to their scientific analysis have been undertaken successfully since 2009.<sup>12</sup>

With the further development of imaging techniques within the Sinai Palimpsests Project,<sup>13</sup> the facilities for exploring palimpsests from the Caucasus have again advanced considerably over the past ten years. Due to these enhancements, especially the new method of transmissive light imaging, the reading rate of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests of Mount Sinai has risen by at least 25%, now amounting to an average of approximately 85% – an increase that makes a new edition necessary.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, we are in a position now, for the first time ever, to also investigate the great bulk of other Georgian and Armenian palimpsests that witness the first centuries of Caucasian literacy, with the aim of determining the relations of the three Christian peoples, their Churches, and their languages in the first millennium of our era, both among each other and with the relevant surrounding powers. This is the objective of the Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe) project,<sup>15</sup> which has been running since 2022 at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg.<sup>16</sup> In the following pages, I intend to illustrate on the basis of two case studies which obstacles we meet in dealing with Caucasian palimpsests and which methods we apply to overcome them.

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11 For example in Kurashi, in the Svanetia region of north-west Georgia; see Gippert 2013.

12 These projects are *Georgische Palimpsesthandschriften* (2009–2019) and *Palimpsest Manuscripts of the Matenadaran* (2017–2020), both kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, Hanover.

13 This project was jointly run by the Holy Monastery of the God-trodden Mount Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), and the UCLA Library and was supported by Arcadia Foundation (2012–2017); see <<http://sinaipalimpsests.org>> and <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>>. The information available on the new website of the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library (<<https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu/>>) is abridged and partly misleading.

14 See Gippert 2023b for a preliminary account.

15 DeLiCaTe is supported by a European Research Council advanced grant.

16 The project members are, besides myself, Emilio Bonfiglio, Mariam Kamarauli, Eka Kvirkvelia, and Hasmik Sargsyan.

## 2 Case study I: The unidentified undertext of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90

The library of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai includes at least fifteen palimpsested codices (or fragments thereof) with an upper text in Georgian.<sup>17</sup> Most contain undertexts that are also in Georgian, either exclusively (Sin. georg. 10, NF 7, 59, 61, 84, 90) or alongside other undertexts (Sin. georg. 34, with one unidentified undertext in Greek; georg. 49, with undertexts in Arabic, Coptic, Greek, and Syriac; georg. NF 13 and 55, with undertexts in Caucasian Albanian, Armenian, and CPA; georg. NF 19, with undertexts in CPA and Greek).<sup>18</sup> Three of these palimpsests are of special importance to the history of Georgian literacy, as their lower layer comprises forms of the so-called *khanmeti* and *haemeti* periods, that is, the time between the beginning of Georgian literacy and c. the ninth century, which manifests itself linguistically in special morphological criteria. These three palimpsests are the one folio with Georgian undertext of Sin. georg. NF 13 (fol. 58)<sup>19</sup> and the sixty-four folios of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90, two badly preserved manuscripts that actually represent one *codex rescriptus*.<sup>20</sup> The case of Sin. georg. NF 84 + 90 is all the more challenging as it is a double palimpsest: with the exception of but a few folios (NF 84, fol. 1; NF 90, fols 2–5, 19–22, 25, 28, 29), the lowest layer (written in *asomtavruli* script, i.e. Old Georgian majuscules, with *khanmeti* and *haemeti* forms) was first covered by a second layer (likewise written in *asomtavruli* but with no *khanmeti* or *haemeti* characteristics) before the latest layer was added (in *nuskhuri* script, i.e. Georgian 'ecclesiastical' minuscules). On the basis of their palaeographical and linguistic appearance, the three layers can be dated to the fifth to seventh, ninth to tenth, and tenth to eleventh centuries, respectively.

The lowest and the second layer each contain fragments of three different texts. For the lowest layer, these are extremely valuable specimens of biblical texts

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17 The Sinai Palimpsests Project (see n. 13) has treated the following Georgian codices of the collection: Sin. georg. 10, 34, 49; NF 7, 13, 19, 55, 59, 61, 71, 84, 90; NF frg. 68a, 72a, 73a.

18 Sin. georg. NF 71 and NF frg. 68a contain only undertexts in CPA; NF frg. 72a and 73a, only undertexts in Greek and Arabic. A special case is CPA NF frg. 16 which was catalogued as a fragment with an overtext in CPA and an undertext in Georgian (see <<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/browse>> under 'CPA NF frg 16'); the distribution of lower and upper layers is actually the opposite (see Gippert and Outtier 2021, 42 with n. 6; Outtier 2023, 171–174).

19 A tentative edition is provided in Gippert forthcoming a.

20 See the catalogue by Aleksidze et al. 2005, 430 and 433–434, and Gippert and Outtier 2021 for details. A similar case of two parts of one codex being catalogued separately is that of Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55.

(the first witness of a *khanmeti-haemeti* psalter<sup>21</sup> and fragments of a *khanmeti* version of the Gospel of Matthew)<sup>22</sup> as well as a *khanmeti* fragment of a homiletic text.<sup>23</sup> From the middle layer, a sequence of two homilies by John Chrysostom (on the Dormition of the Holy Virgin)<sup>24</sup> and the legend of St Febronia have been identified; the latter text, whose Georgian versions have remained unpublished so far, is at present being investigated by Mariam Kamarauli.<sup>25</sup> The sixth undertext, also from the middle layer, had yet to be identified when the descriptions for the Sinai Palimpsests Project were prepared; for the set of thirteen folios containing it (Sin. georg. NF 90, fols 3–6, 9–10, 15–18, 23–24, 38), the online catalogue simply states: ‘Title: Unidentified. Genre: Homiletics or hagiography. Primary Language: Georgian. Script: Asomtavruli. Script characterization: Small, clumsy and slightly slanted. Date: ca. 9th–10th c. CE (801 to 1000)’.<sup>26</sup> This aporia has now been overcome.

## 2.1 Identifying the text

The identification of the text was hampered, first of all, by the fact that the lower and the middle layer were applied line over line, one covering the other. Only four to five characters of the lowest layer, located in the outer margins, were not overwritten, which proved enough to identify it. In contrast to this, the middle layer was written very negligently, in slightly smaller (and slightly more slanted) characters over the lowest layer, which makes it extremely difficult to isolate. To illustrate this, Figs 1 and 2 show fol. 5<sup>v</sup> of Sin. georg. NF 90 in both a plain-colour image and in a pseudo-colour image based on multispectral photographs, and Fig. 3 highlights the left margin of the same folio with the lowest layer containing Psalm 88:12–18 as transcribed line by line in Table 1.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Gippert and Outtier 2021 for a first account of this psalter version.

<sup>22</sup> See Gippert forthcoming b for a first account of this Gospel fragment.

<sup>23</sup> The text is Athanasius of Alexandria’s (or John Chrysostom’s) homily *In natalem Christi diem* (CPG 4560), a later version of which is contained in the so-called Sinai Mravaltavi (Sin. georg. 32-57-33) and other homiletic collections. See Gippert and Outtier 2021, 44 with n. 18 for details.

<sup>24</sup> The two homilies (CPG 5175.21 and 5175.22) are also contained in the Sinai Mravaltavi; see Gippert and Outtier 2021, 44 with n. 21.

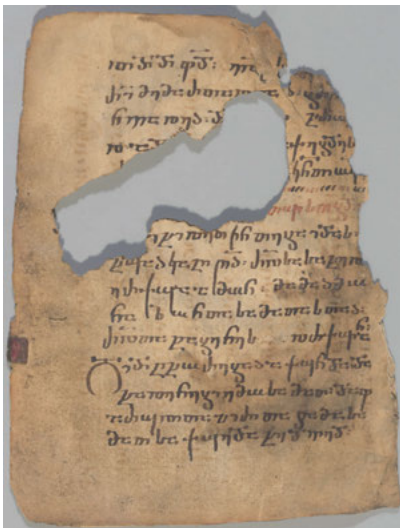
<sup>25</sup> See Mariam Kamarauli’s contribution to the present volume.

<sup>26</sup> See Gippert and Outtier *s.a.*

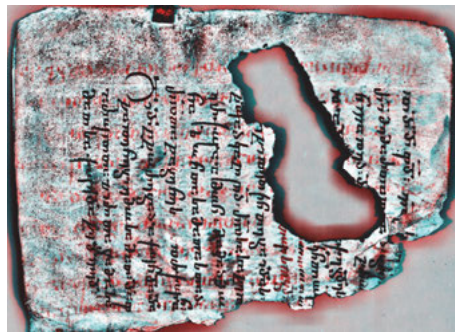
<sup>27</sup> Figures 1 to 4 were processed by Keith T. Knox and kindly provided by the Sinai Palimpsests Project (<<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>>, a publication of St Catherine’s Monastery of the Sinai in collaboration with EMEL and UCLA). In the following transcripts, angle brackets < > mark gaps

Of the middle layer on the same folio, only one sentence was somewhat legible. It covers the first three lines of the page, while the remaining lines yield only unintelligible chunks, as illustrated in Table 2 with Fig. 4.

The sentence in question was easily restorable as *da yovanes hkon<da gw>[rg]wni mravlita afntrakljita <paťio>snita : da saqdari didebisay da ...*, which can be rendered as ‘And John had a crown with many a precious carbuncle (“anthrax”), and a throne of glory, and ...’. It is clear that such a sentence could pertain to either a homiletic or a hagiographical context, including apophthegms, but it was not identifiable as such or in a similar form in the available databases: neither the TITUS corpus, which covers nearly all published Old Georgian text materials,<sup>28</sup> nor the Georgian National Corpus,<sup>29</sup> which is based upon it, yielded any comparable context, and the same is true of a plain Google search. It goes without saying that the only proper name included, *yovane* = John, did not help either, in contrast to the peculiar names that appear in the legend of St Febronia.<sup>30</sup>



**Fig. 1:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (plain-colour image).



**Fig. 2:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°).

and lacunae, angular brackets [ ] show hard-to-read characters, braces { } indicate reconstructed characters, and round brackets ( ) mark resolved abbreviations.

<sup>28</sup> See <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/framed.htm?/texte/texte2.htm#georgiant>>.

<sup>29</sup> See <<http://gnc.gov.ge>>.

<sup>30</sup> See Mariam Kamarauli’s contribution to the present volume.

**Table 1:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>: lowest layer (Psalm 88:12–18).

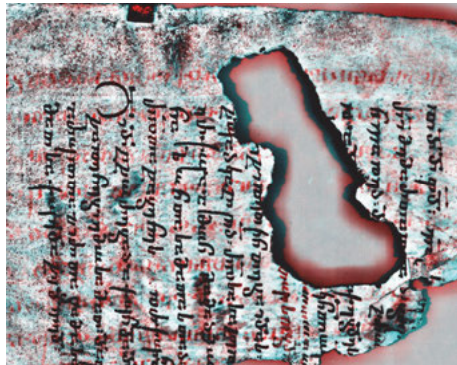
<s>opeli da} {savseba}<y misi> {šen daxam}-  
 <q>[are] f: | črdiloy da} <bğow>{ari šen}  
 <še>[x]km{en}  
 <t>a[b]o[r]{i da hermoni saxelita šeni}-  
 <t>a hi{x}[a]{rebben}  
 <še>[n]i [mk]{lavi ars zliere}<bit>  
 <g>[an]z[ll]{ierdin qeli šeni da ağma}<ğl>-  
 <d>[in] ma{ržowenē šeni simartlit} | <da>  
 <g>anki{txwt ağ}[m]{a}<rtebowl>



**Fig. 3:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°), left margin.

**Table 2:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>: middle layer.

da yovanes hkon< >[rg]wni mrav-  
 lita a[ntrak]jita < >snita : da  
 saqdari didebisay da< >ebad :  
 x~ {sada} gwrqwn{i va}<  
 da [ga]rdageb< >ri : da  
 ta nive owrt  
 s nebisa da{s}k ma  
 q/p scxa  
 [tavisag]an {s}a



**Fig. 4:** Sin. georg. 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (pseudo-colour image, turned by 90°), middle layer.

Considering that more than 90% of the existing Old Georgian homiletic and hagiographical texts are translations, mostly from Greek but sometimes also from Armenian and other languages of the Christian East, it seemed worthwhile to search for a similar context beyond Georgian. And, indeed, a search for close collocations of the name Ἰωάννης and the word στέφανος ('crown'), within a distance of max. three words, in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG)*<sup>31</sup> yielded eight hits, the fifth of which runs: Ἰωάννης στέφανον πολυτελεῆ λίθων τιμίων καὶ θρόνον ἔχων, καὶ ... (i.e. 'John, having a costly crown of precious stones and a throne, and ...'). We see here the clear equivalence of στέφανον with Georgian *gwrgrwni* ('crown'); λίθων τιμίων ('precious stones') with *antrakita p̄atiosnita* ('precious carbuncle'); θρόνον ('throne') with *saqdari* ('throne'); and ἔχων ('having') with *akunda* ('had') – enough to suggest that the context in question, from the legend of St Xenophon and his sons,<sup>32</sup> is the same.

However, the given Greek passage could hardly be assumed to be the model of the Georgian text as it stems from a later version of the legend provided by Symeon Metaphrastes, who, as an author of presumably the tenth century, could not have left his traces in a Georgian palimpsest of Mount Sinai that is probably a century older. On the other hand, in the case of the given *Vita*, several pre-metaphrastic versions do exist in Greek, one of which might underlie the Georgian version. Of the various witnesses indicated in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*,<sup>33</sup> all unedited and therefore not included in the *TLG*, there are at least three that are easily accessible, namely those contained in the manuscripts Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: BnF), grec 1613 (Diktyon 51235, c. fifteenth century; hereafter: U);<sup>34</sup> Sin. gr. 519 (Diktyon 58894, c. tenth century; hereafter: Y);<sup>35</sup> and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30 (Diktyon 34287, c. tenth to eleventh centuries; hereafter: Z).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See <<https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>>.

<sup>32</sup> *Vita et conversatio sancti Xenophontis et filiorum ejus Joannis et Arcadii*; *BHG* 1878; *PG* 116, 1032, l. 52.

<sup>33</sup> *BHG* 1877u-z; the second metaphrastic *Vita* registered as *BHG* no. 1879 also can be excluded as a later version.

<sup>34</sup> Fols 7<sup>r</sup>–17<sup>r</sup> (see <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10722791q/f13.item#>>); *BHG* 1877u.

<sup>35</sup> Fols 218<sup>ra</sup>–222<sup>rb</sup> (see <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279380538-ms/?sp=222>>); *BHG* 1877y.

<sup>36</sup> Fols 263<sup>va</sup>–269<sup>vb</sup> (see <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279393739-jo/?sp=268&st=image>>); *BHG* 1877y.



## 2.2 The *Vita* of St Xenophon

The *Vita* of the fifth-century Constantinopolitan saint Xenophon, his wife Maria, and their sons John and Arcadius<sup>37</sup> does not exist in Greek alone. An Armenian version was published in the collection of saints' legends of 1874,<sup>38</sup> and an Arabic one in an article by Georg Graf in 1909.<sup>39</sup> More important for us, the legend also exists in Georgian, albeit not yet in an edited form (and therefore not included in any database). Of the fourteen manuscripts listed as containing this version,<sup>40</sup> two are of a considerable age, namely, Sin. georg. 52 (hereafter: S)<sup>41</sup> and Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140 (hereafter: J).<sup>42</sup> Besides the legend of St Xenophon, S, a small codex (115 × 90 mm) consisting of ninety-nine folios, contains only one more hagiographical text, namely, the *Life of St Mamas*.<sup>43</sup> The two legends were obviously written by two different scribes, as witnessed by individual colophons they left on fols 52<sup>r</sup> and 99<sup>v</sup>, one by a certain *Ḳwirīḳe* (i.e. Cyriacus), who 'wrote down the Martyrdom of St Mamas for Mt Sinai' (without a date),<sup>44</sup> and one by the most illustrious Georgian monk of Mount Sinai, Ioane Zosime (John Zosimus), who worked in the monastery in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>45</sup> The latter's colophon is dated to the year (from Creation) 6587 and the 'chronicon' 202, which according to the Georgian time-reckoning system yields 982–983 CE,<sup>46</sup> probably the date of the binding undertaken by John;<sup>47</sup> it is conceivable that he was

37 Compare the miniature showing the four saints in the *Menology of Basil II* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.gr. 1613, p. 351; <[https://digi.vatlib.it/pub/digit/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1613/iiif/Vat.gr.1613\\_0373\\_pa\\_0351.jp2/full/1204,/0/native.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/pub/digit/MSS_Vat.gr.1613/iiif/Vat.gr.1613_0373_pa_0351.jp2/full/1204,/0/native.jpg)>. St Xenophon was celebrated on 26 January.

38 *Vark'* 1874, 515–526; *BHO* 1246.

39 *BHO* 1247. My thanks are due to Konrad Hirschler, who made this publication available to me.

40 Gabidzashvili 2004, 356, no. 1156.

41 Fols 52<sup>r</sup>–99<sup>r</sup>.

42 Fols 173<sup>r</sup>–188<sup>r</sup>. The other codices listed in Gabidzashvili 2004 are the KKNCM manuscripts A-161 (1738), fols 123<sup>v</sup>–135<sup>v</sup>; A-230 (XIX), pp. 38–51; A-536 (1822), fols 77<sup>r</sup>–85<sup>v</sup>; A-1525 (1797), fols 36<sup>v</sup>–42<sup>v</sup>; S-134 (XVIII), fols 124<sup>r</sup>–137<sup>v</sup>; S-2646 (XIX), fols 21<sup>r</sup>–29<sup>r</sup>; S-3640 (XIX), fols 19<sup>r</sup>–28<sup>r</sup>; S-4581 (1827), fols 70<sup>r</sup>–79<sup>v</sup>; H-436 (XVIII), fols 1<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>r</sup> (aceph.), H-2281 (1793), fols 105<sup>r</sup>–119<sup>v</sup>; H-2385 (XIX), fols 37<sup>v</sup>–46<sup>v</sup> [!]; H-2819 (1848), fols 73<sup>v</sup>–81<sup>v</sup>.

43 Fols 1<sup>r</sup>–51<sup>r</sup>; *BHG* 1019; *BHO* 591 and 592.

44 For the colophon, see Garitte 1956, 188. In it, 'for Mt Sinai' may indicate that *Ḳwirīḳe*'s part was written in Jerusalem or Palestine.

45 For the colophon, see Garitte 1956, 189. Beyond John Zosimus, it mentions a certain Mikael (Michael) as the commissioner and a Giorgi (George) with no function indicated.

46 For the Old Georgian time-reckoning system, see Gippert 2018, 145.

47 The colophon refers to the binder (*šemmoseli*) only by the name of John (*iovane*), but it is probable that this is a self-reference, given that the monastery library has many Georgian books bound by him from this period.

also the scribe of the legend of St Xenophon.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to the Sinai codex, J is much larger (185 × 133 mm) and more comprehensive. Besides the legend of St Xenophon, it comprises five further hagiographical texts,<sup>49</sup> plus a prayer for penitence by Basil the Great that was translated by Euthymius, one of the founders of the Holy Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos.<sup>50</sup> The scribe, a certain Davitay,<sup>51</sup> has left several short notes in it<sup>52</sup> but no dating. The reference, in one of his notes, to the soul of Prochorus the Iberian, the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Jerusalem, suggests the time between the foundation of the monastery and the founder's death, that is, 1064–1066 CE, as a *terminus a quo*.<sup>53</sup>

The Georgian versions of St Xenophon's legend as contained in the Sinai and Jerusalem manuscripts are clearly related to the pre-metaphrastic Greek text. To illustrate this, it may suffice to compare the incipits as contrasted in Table 3.

<sup>48</sup> Garitte 1956, 189 even assumes John to be the 'author' (*auteur*) of the legend; this, however, is unlikely because of the existence of the palimpsested text.

<sup>49</sup> Two parts of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat (*BHG* 224), Alexis the Man of God (*BHG* 51), Onuphrius (*BHG* 1378), and Marina (*BHG* 1165). See the description in Blake 1925–1926, 141–142; the folio numbers it indicates have meanwhile changed, as visible in the microfilm of the Library of Congress: <<https://www.loc.gov/item/00271073355-jo/>>.

<sup>50</sup> The text (on fols 229<sup>v</sup>–237<sup>v</sup>) is styled 'Une longue invocation d'une belle main athonite implorant des bénédictions sur saint Euthyme' by Robert Pierpont Blake (1925–1926, 142), which is quite misleading; its title is *L(o)cvay sinanulisay berzuli targmnil c(mid)isa mamisa eptwme mtacmid(e)lis(a)y*. *Tkumuli cmidisa basilis mtavar-ebiskoposisay* ('Prayer of penitence, (in) Greek, translated by St Euthymius the Athonite, authored by St Basil the Archbishop') and its incipit is *O(wpa)lo ġ(mer)to čemo saxiero da mraval-mocq(a)(e)o, sašinelo ...* ('Lord, my God, benign and very merciful, terrifying ...'). This is obviously the *Oratio secunda ante lectionem* attributed to John Chrysostom (*CPG* 4688) in a version much closer to the Greek text (*PG* 63, 923–928) than the fragment contained in the manuscript Athos, Iviron, georg. 19, fols 200<sup>ra</sup>–202<sup>vb</sup> (see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, 206, no. VII.); the incipit of the latter corresponds by and large to Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140, fol. 231<sup>r</sup>, l. 10 (*PG* 63, 923, l. 36).

<sup>51</sup> The last part was clearly written by a different scribe; the hand is characterised by, among other features, long descenders of letters in the last line, which we also find in manuscripts of the Holy Monastery of Iviron, such as georg. 16 (fols 280<sup>v</sup>, 282<sup>r</sup>, 312<sup>v</sup>), 33 (fols 6<sup>v</sup>, 13<sup>v</sup>, 14<sup>v</sup>, 43<sup>r</sup>, 79<sup>v</sup> etc.), 60 (fols 110<sup>v</sup>, 112<sup>v</sup>), 85 (see Gippert, Outtier and Kim 2022, pl. XIX), and the fragment 95y. Blake (1925–1926, 142) was certainly correct in styling this 'une belle main athonite'.

<sup>52</sup> On fols 86<sup>r</sup>, 188<sup>r</sup>, and 198<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Together with Prochorus, the colophon (on fol. 86<sup>r</sup>) mentions one Theodore and one Michael, as well as another Michael and one Saba as the 'spiritual brothers' of the scribe (*k(rist)je adide s(w)li proxoresi, t(evdor)jesi da m(i)k(ae)lisi da žmata č(e)mta s(w)liertay, m(i)k(ae)l da sabaysi, a(mi)n* ('Christ, exalt the soul of Prochorus, Theodore and Michael and of my spiritual brothers, Michael and Saba, amen!'). Of the latter names, only Saba's occurs in other sources relating to the monastery, naming a monk who was active in the late thirteenth century (Metreveli 1962, 36). Blake's dating of the codex ('XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle') may be accepted for the 'Athonite' part but not necessarily for Davitay's.

**Table 3:** Incipits of St Xenophon's legend in comparison.

<p><i>gwtxrobdā čuen bertagani priad (&lt; J) didi vinme (vinme didi J) vitarmed (&lt; S) ksenepore (+ vinme J) iqo sepeculi (+ mdidari priad J). da ese moscrape iqo mcnebatā tws ġmrtisatā ...</i></p> <p>UZ: Διηγῆσατο τις μέγας γέρων ὅτι Χενοφῶν τις γέγονε (&lt; Z) συγκλητικός ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν εὐπορίαν (+ ὑπάρχων Z) ἦν δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ σπουδαῖος περὶ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ Θεοῦ ...<sup>54</sup></p> <p>Y: Διηγῆσατο τις γέρων μέγας ὅτι Χενοφῶν τις γέγονε συγκλητικός· σπουδαῖος περὶ τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ Θεοῦ ...<sup>55</sup></p>	<p>‘One of the monks, very (&lt; J) great, told us that (&lt; S) a certain (&lt; J) Xenophon was a royal descendant, (+ very rich J), and he was eager for the knowledge of God ...’</p> <p>‘A great monk told (me) that a certain Xenophon became (&lt; Z) a senator over all plenty (+ being Z). And the man was also eager for the orders of God ...’</p> <p>‘A great monk told (me) that a certain Xenophon became a senator, eager for the orders of God ...’</p>
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Comparing the desinits, which in the Greek versions differ more strikingly, it becomes clear that the Georgian text is closest to the Greek text of the Paris manuscript grec 1613, as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Desinits of St Xenophon's legend in comparison.

<p><i>x(olo) ksenepore carigo samoseli zazisay. da ganvida udabnod da cxonda mravaltā celta (dġeta J). da miemtxwa (+ igi J) madlsa cinacarmetqvelebisa. da esret srul ikmna (kmnuli J) da (&lt; J) ganvida cxorebisa gan amis soplisa ...</i></p> <p>U: ὁ δὲ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς ὁ κύρις Ξενοφῶν λαβὼν ἑαυτῷ ἐσθῆτα τριχίνην ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον· καὶ ζήσας ἐκεῖ τὸν ὑπόλοιπον χρόνον τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ ἀξιώθεις προρρήσεων καὶ μεγάλων μυστηρίων οὕτως μετῆλθεν τὸν βίον ...<sup>56</sup></p> <p>Y: καὶ ἐμβάλῃ τὸν φόβον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ὅπως ἐπιτύχωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τῶν ἐπηγγελμένων ἡμῖν ἀγαθῶν ...<sup>57</sup></p> <p>Z: καὶ ἐμβάλῃ τὸν φόβον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ἵνα μὴ τῆ ἀμελείᾳ καὶ ῥαθυμίᾳ ἡμῶν ἀπωλέσωμεν τὰ ἠτοιμασμένα ἡμῖν ἀγαθὰ ...<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>‘But Xenophon took a clothing of sackcloth and went into the desert and lived (there for) many years (days J). And he encountered the grace of prophecy, and thus he was accomplished and (&lt; J) left the life of this world ...’</p> <p>‘But her husband, Lord Xenophon, taking with himself a clothing of hair, went out into the desert. And having lived there the remaining time of his life, deemed worthy of prophecies and great mysteries, he thus passed this life ...’</p> <p>‘and that he would throw his fear into our souls so that we, too, attain the goods that we were promised ...’</p> <p>‘and that he would throw his fear into our souls so that we, too, will not lose by our indifference and sluggishness the goods that were prepared for us ...’</p>
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<sup>54</sup> Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 7<sup>r</sup>, ll. 3–5; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 263<sup>va</sup>, ll. 21–24.

<sup>55</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 218<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 22–24.

<sup>56</sup> Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>, ll. 11–16.

<sup>57</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 222<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 28–31.

<sup>58</sup> Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 269<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 14–19.

As both the incipits and the desinits show, there is a striking difference between the Georgian and the Greek texts, which consists in the name of Xenophon appearing as *ksenepore* in the former, as if representing a Greek \*Ξενοφόρος,<sup>59</sup> thus reminding us of the name form *ascanāfer*, which is used for St Xenophon in the Ethiopian synaxarium. Whether or not this rather presupposes a Greek Ξενόφρων, as proposed by Paul Peeters,<sup>60</sup> must remain open for the time being.

### 2.3 Restoring the palimpsested text

With the two Old Georgian witnesses of the legend as well as the closest Greek version at hand, the text of the Sinai palimpsest can now be restored with high confidence. It may be noted that instead of the presumed adverb *sada* ('where'), the passage appearing on fol. 5<sup>v</sup> contains the name of Xenophon's second son, Arcadius (*arḱadi*). Table 5 illustrates the text in question as it can be established by comparing the other witnesses available.<sup>61</sup>

**Table 5:** Sin. georg. NF 90, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>, middle layer: restored text.

<p><i>da yovanes hkon</i>&lt;da g&gt;<b>[rg]wni mrav-</b>  <i>lita a[ntrak]jita</i> &lt;paṭio&gt;<b>snita : da</b>  <i>saqdari didebisay da</i> &lt;gances&gt;<b>ebay :</b>  <i>x(olo)</i> [<i>arḱad</i>]{<i>is</i>} <b>gwrwnṭi va</b>&lt;rsḱowl&gt;<i>aoani</i>  <b>da</b> {<i>tax</i>}{<i>ti</i>} <b>gardageb</b>&lt;owli da ž(owa)&gt;<b>ri : da</b>  <i>[ağ]{dges}</i> [<i>or</i>]<b>nive owrt</b>&lt;iertars d&gt;<i>{a owtxrob}</i>-  <i>{de}s čow[e]neb[a]sa da</i> [<i>rk(ow)</i>]{<i>a</i>} [<i>dedo</i>]-  <b>p[alman kmarsa ma]s cxa</b>[<i>d a</i>]{<i>s da</i>}&lt;<i>s</i>&gt;-  <b>[ta tan]{a} gan</b>{<i>cese</i>}&lt;bowl arian&gt;</p>	<p>'And John had a crown with many a precious stone, and a throne of glory and a commandment (staff). But Arcadius (had) a crown with stars and a covered throne and a cross. And both narrated to each other the apparition, and the lady said to (her) husband: "It is obvious, they are arranged with the (angelic) hosts!"'</p>
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<sup>59</sup> Greek personal names are usually represented in Georgian in their vocative form; compare *kriṣṭepore* rendering Χριστόφορος.

<sup>60</sup> *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Sin. georg. 52, fols 86<sup>r</sup>, l. 4–86<sup>v</sup>, l. 9; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, georg. 140, fols 183<sup>v</sup>, l. 16–184<sup>r</sup>, l. 6; Paris, BnF, grec 1613, fol. 14<sup>r</sup>, ll. 3–9; Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, ll. 24–33; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Sabas 30, fol. 267<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 27–39. Characters that were correctly read before the parallels were identified are printed in bold.

On this basis, we can now attempt to evaluate the relationship of the palimpsested text to its parallels. A few observations may suffice to illustrate this.

The restitution of *gancesebay* ('commandment staff') in l. 3 is based on both S and J, which have *saqdari gancesebisay* ('a throne of commandment') and *saqdari da gancesebay* ('a throne and a commandment (staff)'), respectively. In contrast to this, with the addition of *didebisay* ('of glory') the palimpsest (P) comes closer to the Greek text of all three compared witnesses (U, Y, Z), which have θρόνον ἔνδοξον καὶ σκήπτρον ('a glorious throne and a sceptre'); only Y adds ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ('in his hand').<sup>62</sup> The published Armenian text (A) has neither 'throne' nor 'sceptre'.<sup>63</sup>

With the restitution of *gwrgrwni mravlita antrakita paṭiosnita* ('a crown with many a precious carbuncle'), the palimpsest again comes closer to the Greek witnesses, which have στέφανον πολυτελεῖ ἔκ λίθων τιμίων ('a costly crown from precious stones'); Y shows another deviation here, adding περικείμενον αὐτῷ ('surrounding him') after στέφανον.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to the Greek, the two later Georgian witnesses do not support the restitution of *paṭiosnita* ('precious'). They read *gwrgrwni mravlita tualita antrakita šemḳuli* ('a crown adorned with many a carbuncle stone') (S) and, even more deviant, *gwrgrwni margaliṭita da tualita antrakita šemḳuli* ('a crown adorned with pearl(s) and carbuncle stone(s)') (J). It is obvious that the introduction of *margaliṭita* ('with pearl(s)') in the latter version is due to a distortion of *mravlita* ('many'), which we find in both the palimpsest and in S, in its turn probably reflecting the Greek πολυ- ('many') in the compound πολυτελής ('costly', lit. 'of many expenditures'). The Armenian text (A) reduces the description to the mere *psak patowakan yoyž* ('very precious crown'),<sup>65</sup> which, however, supports *paṭiosnita* ('precious') by using its etymological counterpart, *patowakan*.<sup>66</sup> In any case, the restitution of *paṭiosnita* must be regarded as certain, as no other Georgian word with a pertinent meaning ends in *-snita* in its instrumental case.

The close relation of the palimpsested text with the Greek versions can also be shown in other passages of the legend. For instance, on fol. 4<sup>r</sup> we find the expression *okroy ganowqves* ('they distributed gold'), clearly matching the

<sup>62</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, l. 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Vark* 1874, 522, ll. 33–34.

<sup>64</sup> Sin. gr. 519, fol. 220<sup>vb</sup>, l. 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Vark* 1874, 522, ll. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Both are derived from a Middle Iranian word meaning 'honour' (Georgian *paṭiv-i*; Armenian *patiw*). See Andronikashvili 1966, 263–265; Olsen 1999, 258.

Greek χρυσίον διαδόντες (διαδόσαντες Y) ('distributing gold'). Both S and J extend this to *okroy da vecxli ganuqves* ('they distributed gold and silver'); A again shows nothing comparable. Further down on the same folio, we can restore *samoselita samonaz<onoebis>ayta*, which would mean something like 'with a dress of being for (or belonging to) monks', with the instrumental reflecting the Greek construction ἐν μοναχικῇ καταστάσει ('in a monastic dress') with the preposition ἐν (Y adds ὄντα 'being'). S and J render this in a more explicit way as *emosa mas samoseli monazontay* ('he wore the clothing of monks'), which in its turn matches A with *zgec'eal ēr zgest miaynakec'i* ('he was clad in the dress of a monk').

Summarising these observations, we may conclude that the text of the Sinai palimpsest comes closest to the Greek versions of U and Z, thus represent an earlier stratum of the legend; the two later Georgian versions (S and J) as well as the Greek manuscript of Mount Sinai (Y) provide a somewhat more elaborate text (with additions and rephrasings), sometimes also matching the Armenian legend (A), which otherwise appears rather abridged. Of course, the general picture can be ascertained only when the legend has been established *in toto*, which is one of the tasks of the DeLiCaTe project.

### 3 Case study II: A palimpsest of mixed content?

One of the most voluminous Armenian palimpsests that is kept outside of the Matenadaran is Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226 (Diktyon 53890), a codex consisting of 249 folios whose upper text comprises the four Gospels in Greek with the Eusebian canon tables and liturgical appendices, probably of the thirteenth century. The fact that it represents a palimpsest with an Armenian undertext has been long acknowledged.<sup>67</sup> Together with Bernard Outtier, I first inspected this codex during a sojourn to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 2013. Our visit was primarily devoted to the Georgian palimpsest géorgien 5 of the same collection,<sup>68</sup> with the aim of compiling a complete set of multispectral

<sup>67</sup> See Astruc and Concasty 1960, 395 and <<https://archivesetmanuscrs.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc24296j>>. The codex is registered under no. 1294 in Gregory's and no. ε3023 in Soden's index of Greek Gospel manuscripts.

<sup>68</sup> See <<https://archivesetmanuscrs.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc13713s>> and <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8596867k>>.

images of both palimpsests; unfortunately, the camera system we used broke after two days, so that we could take only a reduced set of images in the violet range (440 nm) of the Armenian palimpsest. On all seventy-four folios thus photographed, the remnants of an erased layer written in Armenian majuscules (*erkat'agir*) could be made out; in general, the undertext appeared turned by 90° or 270° against the Greek overtext, with two folios each of the present manuscript representing one folio of the palimpsested codex. The Armenian layer was clearly arranged in two columns throughout, with 24–25 lines per column; there was no indication that considerable parts were cut off in preparing the codex for reuse.

In the lower margins of several folios, Outtier detected Armenian notes, obviously added by a later hand. His list,<sup>69</sup> which included personal names like *sadowxt* ('Sandukht'), *trdat* ('Trdat'), *hrip'simē* ('Hripsime'), *dawit' or i down* ('David of Dvin'), and *georgios* ('George'), but also denominations like *giwt xač'in* ('Finding of the Cross'), suggested offhand that the content of the Armenian layer could be hagiographical in nature. This assumption was largely confirmed by the identification on fol. 17<sup>r</sup> of a passage from the short version of the legend of St Shushanik, a female saint of the second half of the fifth century who is venerated by both the Armenian and the Georgian Churches. Table 6 shows a passage from St Shushanik's legend as established on the basis of the violet image of fol. 17<sup>ra</sup> (Fig. 5);<sup>70</sup> illegible characters were restituted by collating the printed edition of the legend.<sup>71</sup> The text passage describes the first controversy of the saint with her husband:

(... Var)dan, and of Vardan, Shushan, who was given in marriage to the Anthypatos, the leader of the Georgians; who because of human fear (or) of special intentions concerning his daughter, had entered the Zoroastrian faith of the magi, for which the blessed Shushan, not agreeing with him, reproached him and confronted him with God and ...

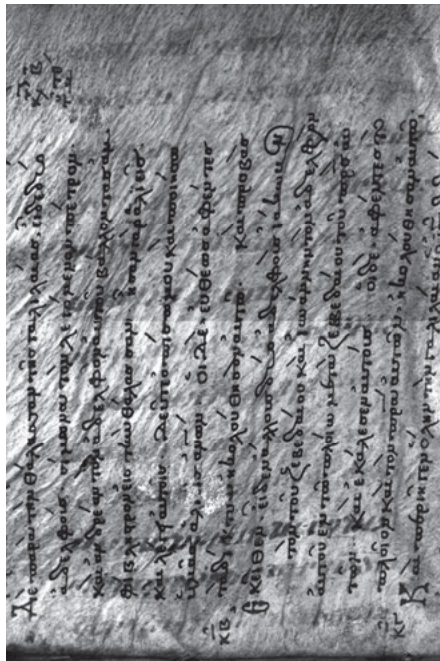
<sup>69</sup> My sincere thanks are due to Bernard Outtier who made his list (of nine entries) available to me. On the basis of the BnF's digitised microfilm (<<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b110048562>>), it has meanwhile been extended to around sixty entries, with quite a number of doublets.

<sup>70</sup> Note that due to the technical restrictions of the system used in 2013, four partial images had to be taken for each page.

<sup>71</sup> *Vkayabanowt'wn* 1853b, 50, ll. 15–24; Abuladze 1938, 50 [123], ll. 8–17. A digital version is available at <[https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/arm/agio/agio.htm?agio178.htm#Mart\\_Sus\\_B\\_](https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/arm/agio/agio.htm?agio178.htm#Mart_Sus_B_)>.

**Table 6:** Passage from the legend of St Shushanik (fol. 17<sup>ra</sup>).

{*dan ew i vardana sowrb*}  
 {*šowšann .*} [o]{*r towaw kin an*}-  
 {*t'ipatreay vrac'*} [*araj*]nor-  
 {*din . or yałags*} [*m*]ardka[n]  
 [*z*]erk{*eti manawand t'e ij*}  
*kamac' vas[n]* {*dster iw*}-  
 [*roy emowt and*] *zradeš-*  
 [*takan awrinaw*]k' [*mogow*]-  
 [*t'eann . orowm oč' hawa*]-  
 [*neal eranelwoyn šowša*]-  
 [*na*] *yandiman[ēr]* *zna*  
 [*ew araj*]ji [*ark*]anēr *za(stowa)c ew*

**Fig. 5:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 17<sup>ra</sup> (spectral image in the violet range).

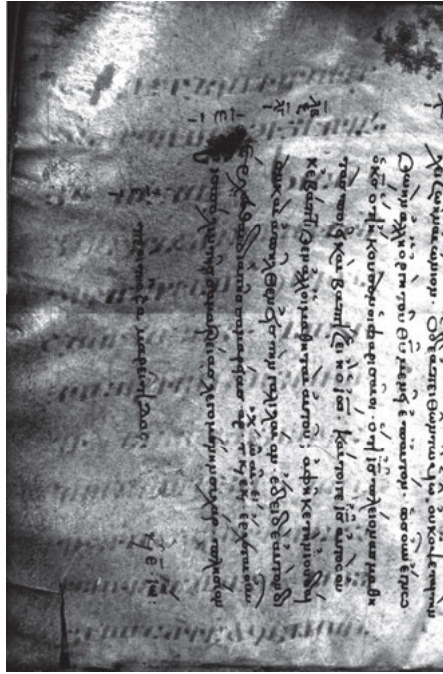
### 3.1 A multiple-text manuscript?

Doubt was soon cast, however, on the assumption that the codex represents, in its lower layer, a mere collection of saints' legends. This initial conjecture was challenged by the identifiable text on several pages that turned out to be of biblical origin, with longer passages from both the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles found. For instance, Matthew 16:16–19 was detected on fol. 29<sup>r</sup>, Luke 1:26–38 on fol. 172<sup>r</sup>, and Hebrews 6:11–12 on fol. 191<sup>r</sup>. Table 7 exhibits the text of Luke 1:29–32 on fol. 172<sup>va</sup> (Fig. 6). Leaving orthographical features aside, the transcript reveals but a few minor differences as compared to the Armenian Vulgate such as, for example, the addition of *iwr* ('her (own)') in *xorhēr and mits iwr* ('she pondered in her mind') in the first line. A remarkable divergence is met with in verse 31 (l. 7), where instead of *ylasjir* ('you will become pregnant') we read *ylasjis*, as indicated in the transcript.



**Table 7:** Luke 1:29–32 (Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 172<sup>va</sup>).

[xorh]ēr and mi[ts iwr]  
 [t'e] {o}[r]pēs [in]č' ic' ē ofjo-  
 yns ays : | Ew asē  
 c'[na hre]šta[kn] mi [erk]<sup>n</sup>-  
 č'ir mariam 'zi g[ter]  
 šnorhs ya(stowaco)y . | ew aha  
 ylasj[is] ew cnc'es or-  
 di . ew [koč'es]c'en za-  
 nown [nora] y(isow)s : | na e-  
 hic'i m[ec] ew ordi barj-  
 [re]loy koč'es' i ew ta-  
 c'ē nma t(ē)r a(stowa)c zat'o'in

**Fig. 6:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 172<sup>va</sup> (upper part; spectral image in the violet range).

Apart from hagiographical and biblical texts, the palimpsest also provided passages from works that belong to the homiletic and historiographical genres. For instance, the text on fol. 42<sup>va</sup> could be determined to stem from a treatise on Mount Tabor and the miracle of Transfiguration, attributed to the fifth-century author Elisaeus (Elišē, 410–475),<sup>72</sup> and a passage from the same author's most well-known work, the *History of Vardan and the War of the Armenians*, was also de-

72 On the treatise, which was actually the report of a pilgrim's visit, and its attribution to Elišē, see Thomson 1967, 27–29; Stone 1986, 105–106. For another perspective, see Pane 2018, 7–8 and the literature cited there.

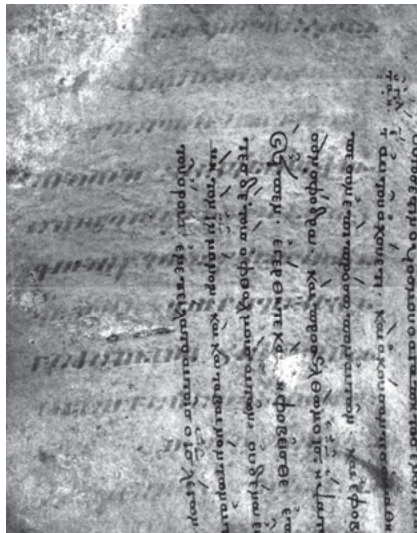
tected (on fol. 246<sup>r</sup>).<sup>73</sup> Table 8 shows the transcript of the former passage, which is about divine services undertaken on Mount Tabor:

... with words, and there are some who worship with alternate voices. They never keep a pause when exhausted, delegating the tasks among each other, groups by groups, by distributing the Psalter sections across the three churches, in a community without finishing. They have an order of service(s) for daytime and night, but in the evening ...<sup>74</sup>

The passage was again established by collating the printed edition.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 8:** Efišē's treatise on Transfiguration (fol. 42<sup>va</sup>).

{baniwk} . ew [ē zor pa]šten  
 {p'oxox}{akan jay}{niwk}  
 {zd}{a}darofwmm} {oč' erbēk'  
 arnowm yaygelov p'ox-  
 anordow[t'e]{amb mi}{meanc'  
 gowndk' gowndk' yeris eke-  
 tec'is[n] \*gowbołayic'n<sup>76</sup>  
 bažanelov ha[sarakow]-  
 t'eamb ara[nc' k]{ata}-  
 {reloy . o[wmin] {zk}{ar}{g paš}-  
 {tamann ztowanjəann} ew  
 gišero[ly] { . isk zerekowmn}



**Fig. 7:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 42<sup>va</sup>  
 (spectral image in the violet range).

<sup>73</sup> The passage concerned is from Chapter 7 of Efišē's text, which is on the torture of the Holy Priests (corresponding to Efišē 1859, 117, ll. 11–17; Tēr-Minasean 1957, 150, ll. 12–16; and the English translation in Thomson 1982, 200, ll. 13–18).

<sup>74</sup> Compare the slightly abridged translation in Thomson 1967, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Efišē 1859, 238–239 (here: 238, l. 22); Pane 2018, 128, l. 40. A digital version is available at <<https://digilib.aua.am/book/1395/1694/12471/%D4%BD%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%BF%D6%84>>.

<sup>76</sup> This is an emendation, kindly proposed by Emmanuel Van Elverdinghe, of the unintelligible word *dowrałayic'n* that seems to be written in the palimpsest. As a loanword of Hebrew *gəbūl* ('limit, boundary'), Armenian *gowbołay*, also attested as *gobolay*, *gobalay* and *goblay*, denotes sections of the Psalter. The edition (Efišē 1859, 238, l. 23) has the *lectio facilior abelayic'n* ('of the monks').

### 3.2 A special type of lectionary

The co-occurrence of hagiographical, biblical, homiletic and historiographical content led to the conclusion, then, that the codex was of a mixed type, even though the handwriting seemed to be the same throughout. However, yet another solution imposed itself through the analysis of fol. 177<sup>vb</sup>, which turned out to contain the beginning of the legend of St Sukias (Hesychios) and his companions, in a form perfectly matching the published version of the text. It reads: ‘The martyrs who came from the court of the Alans after lady Sat’enic to Armenia, and (who were) educated by holy men, disciples of the apostle (Thaddeus) ...’.<sup>77</sup> Before the passage, which begins on l. 4 of the given column, the palimpsest shows two lines written in considerably smaller characters, with some letters appearing as minuscules; this could be made out as the title of the legend, reading: ‘Martyrdom of the holy “bucks” who were martyred in the province of Bagrewand and (who) are 364’.<sup>78</sup> The perplexing denomination of the 364 saints as ‘bucks’ (*k’awšic*) accords with the narrative of the legend according to which they settled as hermits on a mountain named Sowkaw and lived there as grass-eaters, with their bodies covered by lichen and with their ‘hair like that of bucks’.<sup>79</sup> More important for our question is the fact that, before the title, the palimpsest clearly shows one more line, which can in no way be related to the legend; instead, it can easily be identified as a passage from the Old Testament, namely, Isaiah 56:7–8: *<amena>yn het’anosac’, asē tēr tēr* (‘of all heathens, says the Lord, the Lord’). The content of fol. 177<sup>vb</sup> (Fig. 8) is illustrated in Table 9, with the title transcribed in red.

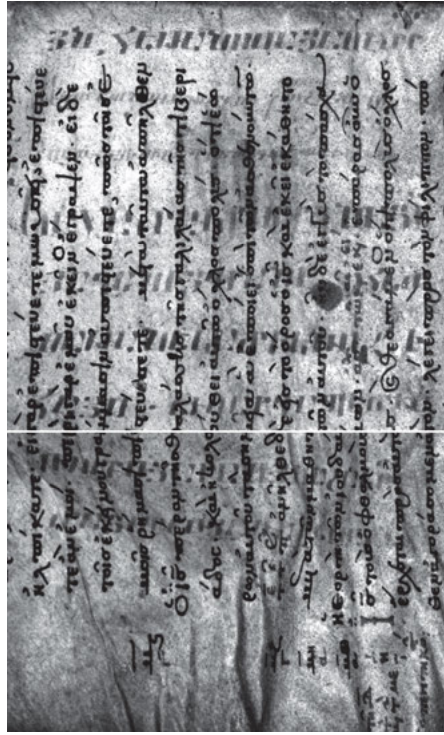
77 *Vkayabanowt’iwn* 1854, 33, ll. 3–7; Abuladze 1944, 23, ll. 29–32. For a partial German translation, see Fritz and Gippert 2005, 396–397. Note that the name of the Alan princess Sat’enic appears as *Sat’aneke-* in l. 6 of the palimpsest.

78 The spelling in the palimpsest is partly defective, with *vkabanowt’iwn* standing for *vkayabanowt’iwn* and *bagrend* for *bagrewand*. Except for the ‘bucks’ and the omission of the name of the mountain, the title matches that of the abridged legend found under 27 August / 17 Nawasardi in the Armenian Synaxarion of Tēr Israyēl, which runs *Vkayowt’iwn srboč’ Sowk’iasanc’n ork’ vkayec’in ‘i bagrewand gawaři ‘i sowkawēt lerinn, ew en t’owov erek’ hariwr ew vat’sown ew č’ors* (‘Martyrdom of St Sukias and his companions who were martyred in the province of Bagrewand on Mount Sowkawēt and (who) are three hundred and sixty and four by number’) (*Yaysmawowrk’* 1834, [III], 100b; for the titles that appear in other versions of the synaxary, see *Synopsis* 2010, 322–323).

79 See *Vkayabanowt’iwn* 1854, 38, l. 24; Abuladze 1944, 32, ll. 8–9.

**Table 9:** Title and incipit of St Sukias's legend (fol. 177<sup>vb</sup>).

yn , het'anosac' asē t(ē)r ^t(ē)r^  
 [Vkabanow]t' [iwn srboc' k'awš[ic'n] ork'  
 vkayec'in i [ba]g[r]en{d} g[aw]a[r]i e[w] en [yk]{d}  
 Nahatakk' [ork' g]nac'i[n]  
 yaŋanac' dranē zhet  
 Sat' aneka tiknoj i  
 hays : ew vardapetea-  
 l i srboc' aranc'n ašake[r^]-  
 tac' srboy arak'eloyñ



**Fig. 8:** Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 42<sup>va</sup>  
 (spectral image in the violet range).

With the immediate succession of a passage from the Old Testament and the beginning of a saint's legend, the given page reminded us of another Armenian palimpsest that had been investigated recently, namely, manuscript M 1306 of the Matenadaran (dated 1419). In contrast to the Paris codex, the palimpsested part of this manuscript is restricted to the four front flyleaves, which are the only parchment folios it contains. A thorough investigation of these flyleaves, based on multispectral images produced in the Matenadaran, has revealed that their undertext consists of pericopes from both the Old and New Testaments, combined with the legend of St Eliseus, the bishop we met earlier as an author (Elišē). The arrangement makes clear that the palimpsested folios must stem from a lectionary which was arranged in accordance with the calendar of saints, with each day being introduced by a psalm (antiphon) and the legends being placed after a pericope from the Old Testament and before a pericope from the Pauline Epis-

bles, in its turn followed by another psalm and a lection from the Gospels. The fragment preserved in the flyleaves thus covers the 22nd of the month Meheki with Psalm 14:4, Isaiah 56:4–5, the legend of St Eliseus, 2 Corinthians 1:8–11, Psalm 114:1, and Matthew 7:6–12; before this, we have pericopes from Galatians (6:15–18) and Matthew (24:30–35) with an undetermined psalm in between, and after it, the 23rd of Meheki devoted to St George, initiated by Psalm 117:1/6 and the lection of Hosea 14:9–10.<sup>80</sup> The given arrangement of biblical texts agrees perfectly well with what we find for the dates of the 20th–23rd of Meheki in the later (‘Cilician’) type of the Armenian lectionary (*čašoc*) as represented by the twelfth-century manuscript M 832 of the Matenadaran or the thirteenth-century codex Arch.Cap. S. Pietro B 77 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.<sup>81</sup> However, in contrast to the latter two witnesses, which provide only the biblical material, the Yerevan palimpsest includes the saint’s legend at the position where it was to be read during liturgy. The comparison thus suggested that the Paris palimpsest is a second representative of this ‘very peculiar type of a lectionary, with saints’ lives accompanying the Biblical lections’.<sup>82</sup> And, indeed, both the later lectionaries indicate a lection of Isaiah 56:6–7 to be read on the day devoted to St Sukias and his companions, which is the 17th of Nawasardi; and, in both, the saints are styled ‘bucks’ in the title for that day.<sup>83</sup>

The assumption that the Paris palimpsest represents a more extensive ‘Cilician’-type lectionary, which is also arranged in accordance with the calendar of saints but includes their legends, has meanwhile been corroborated beyond doubt, thanks to a large set of new multispectral images recently taken in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.<sup>84</sup> For instance, we may now state that the leg-

<sup>80</sup> See Gippert 2022 for the *editio prima* of parts of the undertext of Yerevan, Matenadaran M 1306.

<sup>81</sup> For Yerevan, Matenadaran M 832, see Renoux 2004, 594–596, nos. 36 (20th of Meheki, Holy Cross of Varag), 37 (21st of Meheki, St Eliseus), 38 (24th [!] of Meheki, St George). For the Vatican codex, see Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 162, nos. 165 (20th of Meheki, Holy Cross), 166 (11th [!] of Meheki, St Eliseus), 167 (23rd of Meheki, St George). The psalm sung between Galatians 6:14–18 and Matthew 24:30–35 is Psalm 95 or 96 in the former and 99 in the latter.

<sup>82</sup> Gippert 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Renoux 2004, 568, no. 4; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 136, no. 105 with n. 391.

<sup>84</sup> The new images of Paris, BnF, géorgien 5 and supplément grec 1226 were produced by Ivan Shevchuk, Kyle Ann Huskin, Hasmik Sargsyan, Mariam Kamarauli, and Eka Kvirkvelia in September 2023 and further processed with the Hoku software developed by Keith T. Knox (see <<http://www.cis.rit.edu/~ktkpci/Hoku.html>>). My sincere thanks are due to all of them, as well as the staff of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, for their kind support. The new images permit, among other things, establishing the last line of fol. 17<sup>ra</sup>, which previously had to be left open (see Table 1 with Fig. 3). It obviously reads *zardarowt’eann i vera* (‘the justice upon’; see Fig. 9), con-

end of St Shushanik is introduced by a lection of Wisdom 3:10–12 on fol. 17<sup>va</sup>, preceding the title of the legend, which is found among the first lines of fol. 12<sup>ra</sup>, the lower part of the given folio;<sup>85</sup> the same lection is prescribed in the ‘Cilician’ lectionaries for the date of the saint’s veneration, the 17th of K’aloc’.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the legend of the Second Finding of the Holy Cross, celebrated on the 10th of Mareri, follows a lection of Isaiah 33:22–34:1 (fols 24<sup>rb</sup> + 21<sup>ra</sup>).<sup>87</sup> A corresponding picture is also provided by lections from the New Testament; for instance, the pericope of 1 John 5:1–6 follows the end of the legend of St Sandukht, venerated on the 7th of K’aloc’ (fol. 113<sup>vb</sup>),<sup>88</sup> and Hebrews 13:7–9 and Matthew 5:1–12 follow an account of the death and the relics of St Sahak the Parthian (30th of Nawasardi; fols 110<sup>v</sup> + 111<sup>r</sup>).<sup>89</sup> Exceptionally, the legend of St Yiztbuzit<sup>90</sup> (2nd of K’aloc’) is preceded by a sequence of two pericopes from the Old Testament, namely, Wisdom 6:10–20 and Isaiah 56:3–7 (fols 169<sup>r</sup> + 164<sup>v</sup>); this, too, is accords with the ‘Cilician’ lectionaries.<sup>91</sup> The transition from one date to another is attested on fols 190<sup>r</sup> + 191<sup>v</sup>, with the 5th of Meheki assigned to St Christopher,<sup>92</sup> beginning with Psalm 115 and Ezekiel 18:14–17;<sup>93</sup> the preceding pericopes of Hebrews 6:9–12 and Luke 10:16–20 must in their turn pertain to the celebration of the Second Council of Ephesus (30th of Arac’).<sup>94</sup>

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trasting with *ardar datastann or i veray* (‘the just judgement which upon’) in the editions (*Vkayabanowt iwn* 1853b, 50, ll. 24–25; Abuladze 1938, 50 [123], ll. 17–18).

**85** The title begins with the words *Mah srboyn šowšnkan t’orin ...* (‘Decease of St Shushanik, grand-daughter ...’) (fol. 12<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 1–2 (16–17)). The remaining parts of the title have yet to be deciphered.

**86** See Renoux 2004, 587, no. 28; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 157, no. 152.

**87** See Renoux 2004, 600, no. 43; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 165, no. 172. The legend seems to be unpublished so far; it is also contained in the manuscript Paris, BnF, arménien 110 (fols 535<sup>rb</sup>–538<sup>va</sup>), a ‘festive homiliary’ in majuscules dated 1194.

**88** See Renoux 2004, 584, no. 25; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 156, no. 140. For the saint’s legend, see the edition in *Vkayabanowt iwn* 1853a, 77–83.

**89** See Renoux 2004, 569, no. 5; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 136, no. 106. The text concerning St Sahak is from the *History of the Armenians* by Łazar Parpetsi (Chapter 1, 18). The text passage on fol. 110<sup>va</sup> corresponds to the edition by Ter-Mkrtchean and Malkhasean 1904, 37, ll. 10–13.

**90** On the legend of St Yiztbuzit (also Yazdbuzid, Latinised Isbozetes; *BHO* 433), see Peeters in *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 191–203. Editions of the legend are available in *Vark’* 1874, 124–130; *Acta Sanctorum* 1925, 204–216; Abuladze 1944, 114–123.

**91** See Renoux 2004, 584, no. 24; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 156, no. 148.

**92** The text of the legend corresponds to that published in *Vark’* 1874, 527–533.

**93** See Renoux 2004, 593, no. 34; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 161, no. 163. As in the ‘Cilician’ lectionary, Ezekiel 18:14 is introduced by the formula *Ayspēs asē adovnayi t(ē)r* (‘Thus speaks Adonai, the Lord’; fol. 191<sup>rb</sup>, ll. 11–12), attested as such in Ezekiel 3:27.

**94** See Renoux 2004, 593, no. 33; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 161, no. 162.

Lastly, the scheme also holds for the homiletic and historiographical text materials contained in the palimpsest, which were obviously included because they concern persons or events that are celebrated during the liturgical year. This is true of, for example, King Trdat, whose account, mostly taken from the *History of the Armenians* by Agathangelos,<sup>95</sup> is introduced in accordance with his celebration on the 21st of Trē by a pericope from Wisdom (6:2–10; fol. 138<sup>ra</sup>) and followed by lections of 1 Timothy 2:1–7 and Luke 11:14–28 (fols 52 + 57).<sup>96</sup> The treatise by Elišē on Transfiguration (see Section 3.1) is likely to have been read on the feast of Vardavař, which appears in the ‘Cilician’ lectionary of Yerevan after the 27th of Hoři (St Gayane) and in that of the Vatican after the 17th of K’aloc’ (St Shushanik);<sup>97</sup> in its case, however, the relevant pericopes have not yet been determinable, given that the text is preceded and followed by other non-biblical materials, which in their turn have not yet been identified. Of the text preceding it, only the closing doxology can be made out in the palimpsest (... *arak’esc’owk’ hawr ew ordwoy ew hogwoy srboy ayžm ew mišt* ‘... we will send to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever’); fol. 212<sup>va</sup>, ll. 3–5),<sup>98</sup> and after the end of Elišē’s treatise (fol. 36<sup>ra</sup>, l. 20), we read an explanatory text (*t’argmanowt’iwn*) on Vardavař, which, according to its title, is attributed to James, the Brother of the Lord (*Yakovbow elbawr t(eař)n*) and which begins with the words *Vardavař ays patmi. varžapet orpēs vardapet asemk’ varžowmn aypēs* (‘Vardavař is thus told: we, teacher as well as master, relate the custom as follows’; fol. 41<sup>v</sup>, ll. 1–4).<sup>99</sup> A corresponding passage is not found in any database available.

The homilies on Vardavař are not the only texts that have resisted identification so far. The same is also true of, for example, the legend concerning the Holy Cross of Varag, which is celebrated on the 20th of Meheki.<sup>100</sup> In one case, an un-

95 The beginning of the text on fol. 138<sup>ra</sup> corresponds to § 763 of the edition by Ter-Mkrtchean and Kanayeants (1909, 396, ll. 7–10). See the English translation by Thomson 1976, 303, ll. 6–9.

96 See Renoux 2004, 581, no. 21; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 155, no. 145.

97 See Renoux 2004, 573, no. 11 with n. 188; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 157, no. 153. Note that Elišē’s report is also contained, as an appendix (no. 5), in the lectionary codex Vienna, Bibliothek im Mechitaristenkloster, 269, on fols 259<sup>v</sup>–262<sup>r</sup>. See the catalogue by Dashian 1895, 688a.

98 A similar formula is found in a colophon of the Bible codex Yerevan, Matenadaran M 347, fol. 604<sup>r</sup> (see Yeganian et al. 2004, 70), which has no relation to the given context.

99 This text is by no means identical with the ‘Letter’ by Justus, the third successor of James as the bishop of Jerusalem; on this, see Van Esbroeck 1975, 337–339.

100 See Renoux 2004, 594–595, no. 36 with n. 246; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 162 no. 165. In the palimpsest, the text extends at least over fols 75 and 82 as well as 124 and 129; it is not identical with the text on the cross published in Alishan 1901, 521–525. Possibly this is the unpublished legend as contained in the *čarāntir* codex (of 1224) Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechitarista, 17, fols 527<sup>vb</sup>–529<sup>ra</sup> (see Sarghissian 1924, 32, no. 114).

published hagiographical text was only identifiable via its Georgian counterpart, namely, the legend of Sts Cyprian and Justina, pertaining to the celebration of the two saints on the 5th of Arac'.<sup>101</sup> The clue to its identification was the mention (on fol. 159<sup>va</sup>, ll. 19–20) of 'a certain Athanasios, deputy of the duke' (*at'anasios omn at'orakic' komsin*), a phrasing that exactly matches the Georgian version as contained in the palimpsest Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, georg. 2, which reads: <at>*anasi saqdris*<moq>*owasman mis <kom>sisaman*.<sup>102</sup> As a matter of fact, the agreement of the Armenian text (extending over at least fols 157–160 and 186<sup>va</sup>) with the Georgian legend is straightforward – an observation that is all the more important for our project, as St Cyprian's Georgian legend is one of the very few hagiographical texts attested in a *khanmeti* shape and thus can be attributed to the sixth to seventh centuries.<sup>103</sup> However, there is still a noteworthy difference: according to the Georgian text, the saints were martyred on the 5th of the month *Ṭirisdidi*,<sup>104</sup> which would correspond to the month of Trē (or Trekan) in the Armenian tradition;<sup>105</sup> in contrast to this, the Paris palimpsest names the 5th of Arac' (*or awr E ēr aranc' [!] amsoy*; fol. 186<sup>va</sup>, ll. 10–11). As this latter date accords with the calendar that underlies the given lectionary, this discrepancy may be due to a later adaptation – a suggestion that requires further investigation.<sup>106</sup>

**101** See Renoux 2004, 587, no. 29; Renoux and Sirinian 2018, 158–159, no. 155. The text is possibly identical with one of those contained in the *čarəntir* codices Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechtarista, 1014, fols 474<sup>vb</sup>–477<sup>vb</sup> (twelfth to thirteenth centuries; see Sarghissian 1924, 61, no. 121) and 985, fols 185<sup>vb</sup>–186<sup>vb</sup> (thirteenth century; see Sarghissian 1924, 124, no. 53).

**102** Fol. 94<sup>ra</sup>, ll. 14–16; see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–24.

**103** See Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, xxvi–xxxii.

**104** *ttowesa ṭirisdidisasa xowtsa*: fol. 103<sup>vb</sup>, ll. 11–12 (see Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–33). The later version in the manuscript Athos, Iviron, georg. 8 exhibits the name variant *ṭirisḱnisasa* (fol. 318<sup>vb</sup>, l. 25), and the version in Tbilisi, KKNCM, A-95, has *ianvarsa tormętsa* ('12 January') instead (fol. 385<sup>va</sup>, l. 31).

**105** See Gippert 1987, 67–68 as to the Armenian and Georgian month names that reflect the Iranian god Tir. The legend in Venice, Biblioteca della Congregazione armena mechtarista, 985 (see n. 101 above) gives 2 October (*hoktemberi B*) as the date (see Sarghissian 1924, 124, no. 53).

**106** The Greek tradition has the contradictory dating  $\pi\rho\omicron$  τεσσα\rhoων καλάνδων Οκτωβ\rhoιω β', which seems to indicate 28 September as well as 2 October. The Syriac versions name the 15th of June / *Ḥzirān* (see the synopsis in Gippert, Sarjveladze and Kajaia 2007, 6–33). See Gippert 1988 as to the difficulties of aligning the month names that appear in different hagiographical traditions.



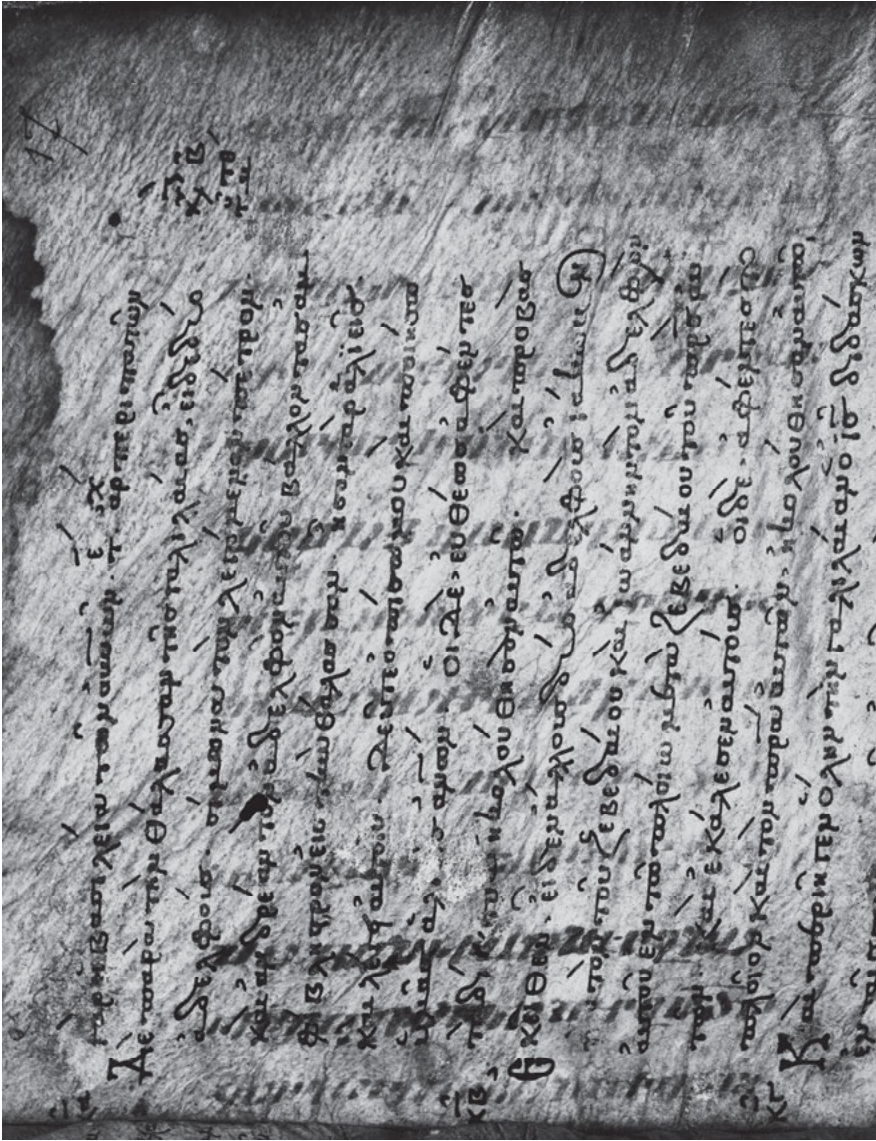


Fig. 9: Paris, BnF, supplément grec 1226, fol. 17<sup>a</sup> (multispectral images, 365 and 850 nm, divided).

## 4 Concluding remarks

As the two case studies show, hitherto unexplored palimpsests can throw important new light on the history of Caucasian literacy, not only concerning the development of the hagiographical genre in Armenian and Georgian but also with respect to the evolution of new liturgical traditions over time. The decipherment of the palimpsested materials available is therefore indispensable to the further progress of our project.

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## Abbreviations

*Acta Sanctorum* = *Acta Sanctorum, Novembris collecta, digesta, illustrata*, vol. 4, Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1925.

*BHG* = François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd edn (Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957; *Novum Auctarium* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 65), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1984.

*BHO* = Paul Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Subsidia Hagiographica, 10), Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1910.

*CPG* = Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 2: *Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974.

*PG* = Jean-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*, 1–161, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1857–1866.

*Synopsis* = [Yeznik Petrosyan (ed.)], *Համաբարբառ Յայտնաւորք. Ը. Աւգոստոս / Synopsis Synaxarion*, vol. H: *August*, Etchmiadzin: Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 2010.

TITUS = Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien <<https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>>.

*Vark'* = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւնք սրբոց. Հատընտիր քաղեալք ի Ճատընտրաց*, vol. 2, Venice: San Lazzaro, 1874.

*Vkayabanowt' iwn* = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն եւ զիւտ նշխարաց ս. Թադէի առաքելոյ եւ Մանդուխտ կուսի* (Սոփերք հայկականք, 8), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1853a.

- Vkayabanowt'wn = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն սրբոյն Շուշանկան դատեր մեծին Վարդանայ* (Մոփերք հայկականք, 9), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1853b.
- Vkayabanowt'wn = [Ghevond Alishan (ed.)], *Վկայաբանութիւն սրբոյն Բարդղղումէոսի առաքելոյ եւ ս. Ոսկենց եւ Սուքիասանց* (Մոփերք հայկականք, 19), Venice: San Lazzaro, 1854.
- Yagsmawowrk' = [Krikor Peshtimaldjian (ed.)], *Յայսմաւորք ըստ կարգի ընտրելագոյն օրինակի յայսմաւորաց Տէր Իսրայէլի*, Constantinople: Boghos Arabian, 1834.

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