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ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ
ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Through Pilgrims' Eyes: Mt Sinai in Pilgrim Narratives
of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Anastasia DRANDAKI

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THROUGH PILGRIMS' EYES: MT SINAI IN PILGRIM NARRATIVES OF THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

*A bolle and a bagge he bar by his syde.
An hundred of ampulles on his hat seten,
Signes of Synay and shelles of Galice,
And many a crouch on his cloke, and keys of Rome
And the vernicle bifore, for men sholde knowe
And se bi hise signes whom he sought hadde.
This folk frayned hym first fro whennes he come.
"Fram Synay' he seide," and fram [the] Sepulcre.*

William Langland (c. 1330-c. 1400), *The vision of Piers Plowman*, V: 5.519-5.526¹

In one of the most celebrated works of mediaeval English literature, Langland's pilgrim proudly displays on his hat a hundred "ampulles", which bear witness to his travels to the great Christian shrines of the era. Tokens of religious devotion, these badges also guaranteed unrestricted passage and exemption from taxes on the journey, and they were accordingly worn on the most conspicuous item of the pilgrim's clothing, his headgear². And we may note that of the hundred badges, Langland gives pride of place to the "sign" from Sinai, a mark of the exceptional prestige enjoyed by the shrine at this period.

Sinai was for my father a beloved site, an inexhaustible treasure-house of knowledge for the discipline to which he de-

voted his life, and a source of inspiration and blessing on his intellectual pursuits. For this reason there was never any doubt in my mind that the present study, which centres on the pilgrims who visited Sinai to pursue their own individual aspirations, should be dedicated to his memory.

The site of an Old Testament theophany par excellence, Sinai is known to have been prominent from early times among the Christian shrines of the East, alongside the pilgrim sites of the Holy Land. Justinian erected his basilica in the most sacred location on the mountain, the place where according to Exodus Moses heard the voice of God and with bared feet venerated the bush which "burned but was not consumed"³. The Burning Bush had been recognised by the

¹ A shorter version of this paper was presented at the symposium "Art and Cult in Byzantium", 24-26 June 2005, University of Thessaly, Volos. The English translation is the work of John Avgherinos to whom I am indebted.

² J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage, an Image of Medieval Religion*, London 1975, 174-5. Pilgrim badges were also sewn onto manuscripts owned by pilgrims, or depicted in their illustrations: D. Weiss, *Art and Crusade in the Age of Saint Louis*, Cambridge 1998, 208-9 and n. 41.

³ The bibliography is extensive: see esp. M. H. L. Rabino, *Le monastère de Sainte-Catherine du Mont Sinai*, Cairo 1938; K. Amantos, *Σύντομος ιστορία της Ἱεραῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Σινᾶ* (= Ἑλληνικά, Παράρτημα 3), Thessaloniki 1953; H. Skrobucha, *Sinai*, Basel 1959; G. H. Forsyth, "The

Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Church and the Fortress of Justinian", *DOP* 22 (1968), 3-19; G. H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, Ann Arbor 1973; J. Galey, *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine*, London 1980; K. Manafis (ed.), *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens 1990; J. Hobbs, *Mount Sinai*, Austin 1995; D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, A Corpus*, II, L-Z (excluding Tyre), Cambridge 1998, 49-63; Ἰδρυμα Ὁρθοῶς Σινᾶ, *Σιναϊτικά Ἀνάλεκτα, τόμος Α', Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου «Τό Σινᾶ διά μέσου τῶν αἰώνων»*, Athens 2002. An earlier bibliography on the monastery can be found in S. Kontoyannis, "Γενική βιβλιογραφία περί Σινᾶ", *Παναγυριῶτικὸς τόμος ἐπὶ τῇ 1400ῇ ἀμφι-*

first Church Fathers as one of the biblical prefigurations of the Theotokos, specifically associated with her virginity and her role in the Incarnation of Christ, and as a consequence Sinai, the site of the theophany, became one of the prime *loca santa* of Christendom⁴.

The stream of pilgrims visiting the monastery naturally suffered a sharp decline after the Arab occupation, without abating altogether. Yet in spite of sporadic references in pilgrim writings, hagiographical texts and ecclesiastical records, the monastery's course from the eighth to the eleventh century remains largely uncharted⁵. Portable icons provide the main evidence for this period of Sinai's development, even though it is often difficult to provide them with a historical context or even a firm date⁶.

Large-scale pilgrimages to the Holy Land, which may well have incorporated a visit to Sinai, are recorded from the first half of the eleventh century⁷. One of these, which took place in 1026 under the auspices of Duke Robert II of Normandy, involved nearly 700 pilgrims and is said to have been accom-

panied in its final stages by a monk from Sinai, Simeon Pentaglossos, later known as Saint Simeon of Trier⁸. Two factors certainly played a part in this: the rise of the Crusader movement and the arrival and settlement of westerners in the Levant⁹. Parallel with the developments affecting the whole area was one specifically linked with Mt Sinai itself, the remarkable florescence of the cult of St Catherine in the West. Much has been written on this subject in recent years and all that need be said here is that shortly after 1030 a new chapter was opened when some of her relics were taken to the Holy Trinity monastery at Rouen, which became a major cult centre associated with the composition of miracula¹⁰. The sources tell us that it was the Sinaite provenance of these relics that was recognised as the prime evidence of their authenticity.

The belief that the relics of the learned martyr princess had been found near the monastery originated in the Life of St Catherine, which described how after her decapitation by Maxentius, angels carried her body to Sinai¹¹. Inspired by

τηρόδι τῆς Θεοῦς Μονῆς τοῦ Σινᾶ, Athens 1971, 335-66 and S. Kontoyannis, "Συμπλήρωμα εἰς τὴν γενικὴν περὶ Σινᾶ βιβλιογραφίαν", *Θεολογία* 43 (1972), 773-91. See also the catalogue of the exhibition at the Benaki Museum, *Pilgrimage to Sinai. Treasures from the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine*, A. Drandaki (ed.), Athens 2004.

⁴ On the association of the Bush with the Theotokos' virginity: D. Mouriki, "Αἱ βιβλικαὶ προεικονίσεις τῆς Παναγίας εἰς τὸν τροῦλλον τῆς Περιβλήπτου τοῦ Μυστραῖ", *ADelt* 25 (1970), Meletai, 217-51, esp. 221-24; S. Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of the Parecclesion", in P. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 4: *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, London 1975, esp. 336-8. On pilgrimage in the early period: J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (third revised ed.), Warminster 1999; id., *Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, Warminster 1977; S. Coleman and J. Elsner, "The Pilgrim's Progress: Art, Architecture and Ritual Movement at Sinai", in J. Graham-Campbell (ed.), *Archaeology of Pilgrimage* (= *World Archaeology* 26.1, June 1994), 73-89; S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage, Past and Present in the World Religions*, London 1995, 78-94, 209-12.

⁵ For references in the Nessana papyri to the visits of pilgrims to Sinai after the Arab occupation and comparable references in early ninth century hagiographical writings, J. Haldon and L. Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): The Sources, An Annotated Survey*, Aldershot 2001, 57-59. For references to bishops of Faran and, after the abolition of the bishopric of Faran, to bishops of Sinai, Amantos, op.cit. (n. 3), 81-4; N. Tomadakis, "Ιστορικὸ διὰγραμμα", in Manafis (ed.), *Sinai* (n. 3), 14.

⁶ G. and M. Soteriou, *Εἰκόνες τῆς Μονῆς Σινᾶ*, Athens 1956, figs 7-41. K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons. I: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century*, Princeton 1976, 57-82; Haldon and Brubaker, op.cit. (n. 5).

⁷ Sumption, *Pilgrimage* (n. 2), 117-18, 182-4. On the general conditions which led to the growth of pilgrimages from the eleventh century, *ibid.*, 115-36.

⁸ Chr. Walsh, "The Role of the Normans in the Development of the Cult of St Katherine", in J. Jenkins and K. J. Lewis (eds), *St Katherine of Alexandria, Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, Turnhout 2003, 26 and n. 31. On the later tradition of the transfer of St Catherine's relics to Rouen by the same Simeon, R. Fawtier, "Les reliques rouennaises de Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie", *AnBoll* 41 (1923), 357-68; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "St Catherine of Alexandria and Mount Sinai", in P. Armstrong (ed.), *Ritual and Art: Byzantine Essays for Christopher Walter*, London 2005; Walsh (op.cit.), 22.

⁹ Sumption, *Pilgrimage* (n. 2), 137-45, and *passim*; J. Wilkinson et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185*, London 1988, 78-84.

¹⁰ See above n. 8; see also C.W. Jones, "The Norman Cults of Sts Catherine and Nicholas, saec. XI", in G. Cambier (ed.), *Hommages à André Boutemy*, Brussels 1976, 216-30; J. Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England*, Woodbridge 2000, and Jenkins and Lewis (eds), *St Katherine* (n. 8), *passim*, with extensive bibliography. On the cult of St Catherine in Byzantium and at the Sinai monastery itself, Patterson Ševčenko, "St Catherine", op.cit. (n. 8); ead., "The Monastery of Mount Sinai and the Cult of St. Catherine: A Long Road Home?", Lecture given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004 (forthcoming). I would again like to thank Nancy Patterson Ševčenko for generously allowing me access to her unpublished work on Mt Sinai and the St Catherine cult when I was preparing the catalogue for the exhibition «Pilgrimage to Sinai». See also A. Drandaki, "The Sinai Monastery from the 12th to the 15th Century", in *Pilgrimage to Sinai* (n. 3), 26-45.

¹¹ On the dissemination of the Lives of St Catherine in Byzantium and the West, Patterson Ševčenko, "St Catherine", op.cit. (n. 8).

the miraculous shrine in Rouen, her cult spread throughout mainland Europe and thence to England, and it provided the necessary incentive for the pilgrims who flocked to the Holy Land to extend their journey to Sinai and seek out her relics in the one great religious centre in the area, the Monastery of the Virgin of the Burning Bush¹².

As Nancy Ševčenko has pointed out, the first unambiguous reference to the saint's sarcophagus being situated inside the katholikon is found in the typikon of the monastery which dates from 1214¹³. Henceforth we can follow the history of her cult and of her shrine at Sinai in the wealth of pilgrim narratives which describe the arduous journey to the monastery. Still relatively infrequent in the thirteenth century, they increase in number dramatically from the fourteenth century onwards¹⁴, as a result of the creation of an infrastructure to support the pilgrims during their travels and sightseeing in the Holy Land¹⁵. Probably the main factor in this development, however, was the establishment of a literary convention through which pilgrims could describe their experiences¹⁶. These "travel diaries" provide us with information regarding the appearance, operation and general state of the monastery at a given date, but they have their

limitations: pilgrims rarely seem to have taken note of religious artefacts, paintings or architectural details, unless they incorporated features which to their eyes appeared unexpected or extraordinary for a place of worship. Travellers tended to restrict their narratives to what they had come prepared to see – the objects of religious devotion which had inspired them to make the pilgrimage in the first place – and to visualise in experiential terms places and events associated with the Old and New Testament figures in whose footsteps they had been treading¹⁷.

The original focus of interest at Sinai lay in the shrine of St Catherine, the Burning Bush, and Moses' sacred mountain peak (Djebel Musa). Even the most cursory description of the monastery normally mentions the sturdy enclosure walls and the meticulously constructed katholikon with its roof-covering of lead sheets¹⁸. Some narratives also provide a brief account of the interior of the church, noting the twin rows of columns, the tempon and the side-chapels, while the illuminations in the nave made an indelible impression on the awe-struck visitors, who often attempted to count the lamps involved – without success¹⁹. Few narratives fail to remark on the churches en route to the Djebel Musa, which

¹² It is interesting that although western pilgrims refer to "St Catherine's monastery" from as early as the fourteenth century, the formal change of name did not occur until much later, in the late fifteenth-early sixteenth century, as indicated by papal bulls addressed to the abbot and the fraternity. See Drandaki, "The Sinai Monastery", op.cit. (n. 10), 33-4.

¹³ Patterson Ševčenko, "St Catherine", op.cit. (n. 8). On references by western pilgrims to Sinai and St Catherine's relics in the twelfth century, Drandaki, op.cit. (n. 10), 30, with earlier bibliography.

¹⁴ See the pilgrim narratives collected and evaluated by Pringle, op.cit. (n. 3) and A. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam: Studien zu Pilgerföhren und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 1994, 260-66 and passim.

¹⁵ Journeys by sea to the Holy Land were organised in Venice from the early thirteenth century for the benefit of pilgrims from the whole of the western Europe, Sumption, *Pilgrimage* (n. 2), 189. On the journey generally, its cost, the provision of guides, and places to stay, *ibid.*, 185-210.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 258ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-94. Generally on the "experiential" attitude of pilgrims to holy sites and the sociological significance of pilgrimages, V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors, Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca and London 1974, 166-81; V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Anthropological Perspectives*, New York 1978, esp. 172-202; more recent approaches critical of the Turnerian notion of pilgrimage in Coleman and Elsner, "The pilgrim's progress" op.cit. (n. 4); S. Coleman and J. Eade (eds), *Reframing Pilgrimage, Cultures in Motion*, London 2004, Introduction, 1-25.

¹⁸ See Thietmar's descriptions (1217). in *Mag. Thietmari Peregrinatio*, ad

fidem codicis Hamburgensis, J.C.M. Laurent (ed.), Hamburg 1857, 41-7 (henceforth: Thietmar); Jacobus de Verona (1335), in R. Röhrich (ed.), "La pèlerinage du moine Augustin Jacques de Vèrone (1335)", *ROL* 3 (1895), 155-302, esp. 230 (henceforth: Jacobus de Verona); Niccolò da Poggibonsi (1346-50), in Fra Niccolò di Poggibonsi, *A Voyage Beyond the Seas (1346-1350)*, transl. by T. Bellorini and E. Hoade, Jerusalem 1945 (repr. 1993), 105, chapter CCIX (henceforth: Niccolò da Poggibonsi); Ludolphus de Sudheim (1336-41), in "De itinere Terre Sancte", G. A. Neumann (ed.), *AOL* 2 (1884), 346, chapter VII; John Mandeville (c. 1360), in *Mandeville's Travels, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse*, P. Hamelius (ed.), London - New York - Toronto 1960-61, 38, chapter VII (henceforth: Mandeville); Leonardo Frescobaldi (1384), in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384*, by Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, transl. by T. Bellorini and E. Hoade, Jerusalem 1948, 58-9, chapter 23 (henceforth: Leonardo Frescobaldi); Nicolas de Martoni (1394-95), in "Relation du pèlerinage à Jérusalem de Nicolas de Martoni, notaire Italien (1394-1395)", *ROL* 3 (1895), 607 (henceforth: Nicolas de Martoni); le baron D'Anglure (1395), in *Le Saint voyage de Jerusalem du Seigneur d'Anglure*, F. Bonnardot and A. Lognon (eds), Paris 1878, 46-9 (henceforth: D'Anglure).

¹⁹ Jacobus de Verona, 230, states that he counted 300 lamps in the katholikon. According to Niccolò da Poggibonsi, 107, there were too many to count, but the evidence of his own eyes and comments by the monks indicated that the number exceeded 1,500, and many were made of gold or silver. Even if this is an exaggeration, it demonstrates the impressive effect made on the pilgrims by the lamps. Unfortunately only a few examples of mediaeval metalcraft survive at Sinai today. See Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos, "Church Metalwork", in Manafis (ed.), *Sinai* (n. 3).

were dedicated to the Virgin, Prophet Elijah and, on the peak, to Moses himself²⁰, while the presence of two mosques, one inside the monastery and the other at the summit, is generally noted with disapproval²¹. The fourteenth century saw an addition to the pilgrim sites of Sinai – the peak dedicated to St Catherine (Djebel Katrin), where according to tradition her relics had been discovered²². Most travellers record that the summit contained no monument or church of any kind, and the only place of veneration was the cleft in the rock which had sheltered her remains. James of Verona (1335), an Augustinian monk, tells the story of how a king named Scianus (a corruption of Justinian?) decided to found a monastery at Sinai dedicated to St Catherine, but as the summit where the relics were found was steep and unwatered, he erected it on the foothills between the two peaks and transferred them there. This legend shows how it was a truism for fourteenth-century westerners that the saint's relics and not the Bush provided the inspiration for the monastery's foundation²³.

Particular interest also lies in what the narratives fail to mention: it is, for example, surprising and somewhat disappointing that they do not record offerings of icons or other artefacts to the monastery, nor the presence there of craftsmen, artists or any type of workshop. This omission may well be a fortuitous one, as such details were of no interest to the pilgrims of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, however significant they may appear to us today. But what cannot be accidental is the

failure to mention the existence of a Latin chapel – a place of worship intended for use by Catholic visitors to the monastery. If such a chapel was functioning at Sinai in the thirteenth and fourteenth century it seems to me inconceivable that it would not have been referred to by the pilgrims who tend to cite with particular care all the chapels they visited and the rituals they attended during their stay at Sinai. Nearly all of the narratives mention that the “calogeri” were Greeks, underline their hospitality towards all pilgrims and display a curiosity about the monastic routine which, however, does not give undue emphasis to the religious differences between the monks and the Catholic visitors. The strongest evidence comes from Leonardo Frescobaldi (1384) and Nicolas de Martoni (1394-95), who attended the Orthodox liturgy in Greek together with the rest of their party²⁴. It is true that Frescobaldi mentions how the preparations for Holy Communion take a different form in the Orthodox church, but he immediately goes on to say that some of his companions actually received communion from the hands of the archbishop. The testimony or rather the complete silence of contemporary narratives defies the established assumption that a Latin chapel existed at Sinai since the thirteenth century. This hypothesis had been founded on the evidence of a considerably later source, the well-known narrative of Felix Fabri who visited the monastery in 1484²⁵. In his account Fabri relates with resentment how by his time the Catholics had been expelled from the main church by the “schismatic”

²⁰ Thietmar, 47 § XXIII; Antonius de Cremona (1327), in R. Röhrich (ed.), “Antonius de Cremona, Itinerarium ad Sepulcrum Domini 1327, 1330”, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 13 (1890), 153-74, esp. 167 (henceforth: Antonius de Cremona); Jacobus de Verona, 232-3; Niccolò da Poggibonsi, 109-11; Mandeville, 40-1; Leonardo Frescobaldi, 60-1; Nicolas de Martoni, 608-9; D' Anglure, 49-50. On the archaeological findings on the summit at Sinai, see S. Kalopissi, M. Panayiotidi, N. Fyssas, G. Manginis and G. Foukaneli, “Ανασκαφή στην Αγία Κορυφή του όρους Σινά (Gebel Musa). Προκαταρκτικά πορίσματα”, in *Σιναιτικά Ανάλεκτα* (n. 3), 69-90.

²¹ E.g. Antonius de Cremona, 168; Jacobus de Verona, 234; D'Anglure, 48, 51.

²² Antonio de Cremona and nearly all later writers also mention their ascent to the second, less accessible peak (Antonius de Cremona, op. cit.), but Thietmar, 41-7 (in 1217) and an anonymous Greek pilgrim of 1253/4 do not include this in their narratives, *Μερική Διήγησις ἐκ τῶν Ἁγίων Τόπων τῆς Γερονσαλήμ διά τὰ πάθη τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν. Πονημάτων ἀνονήμων γραφέν μεταξὺ τῶν ἐτῶν 1253 καὶ 1254, νῦν τό πρώτον ἐκδιδόμενον μετὰ προλόγου*, A. Papadopoulos Kerameus (ed.), St Petersburg 1895, 10 § 29.5: the same text in German translation in Külzer, *Peregrinatio* (n. 14), 311. Other thirteenth century sources, included in the French chronicle of Ernoul

(c. 1231), mention that the relics had been found on the same peak where Moses received the law, H. Michelant and G. Raynaud (eds), *Itinéraires à Jerusalem et descriptions de la Terre Sainte, rédigés en français aux XIe, XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Osnabrück 1966² (first ed. 1882), 63.

²³ Jacobus de Verona, 231, 234.

²⁴ Leonardo Frescobaldi, 64; Nicolas de Martoni, 607.

²⁵ The theory that many of the “Crusader” icons were intended for the Latin chapel at Sinai was proposed by K. Weitzmann, “Thirteenth-Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai”, *ArtB* XIV.3 (1963), 179-203, esp. 200 (repr. in *Studies in the Arts of Sinai*, Princeton 1982, no. XI); idem, “Crusader Icons and Maniera Greca”, in I. Hutter and H. Hunger (eds), *Byzanz und der Westen: Studien zur Kunst des europäischen Mittelalters*, Vienna 1984, 159; idem, “Icon Programs of the 12th and 13th Centuries at Sinai”, *ΔΧΑΕ* IB' (1986), 82. Weitzmann's theory has been followed by many scholars, see the recent catalogue *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, exhib. cat., H. Evans (ed.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2004, nos 220, 223 and 235. A different view, which questions the existence of the Latin chapel at such an early date, has been expressed by B. Zeitler, “Two Iconostasis Beams from Mount Sinai: Object Lessons in Crusader Art”, in A. Lidov (ed.), *The Iconostasis. Origins - Evolution - Symbolism*, Moscow 2000, 223-37, esp. 228.

Greeks, and were now confined to perform their liturgies in the Latin chapel²⁶. What Fabri seems to be telling us is that the existence of a separate place of worship intended for Catholic visitors had not always been needed at Sinai, but it was rather a recent development. To the best of my knowledge, the first reference to the Latin chapel is to be found in a slightly earlier narrative, that of Anselme Adorno, which dates from 1470-71²⁷; as has been suggested elsewhere, the breach in the monastery's relations with the Catholic church seems to have been a consequence of the general widening of divisions between Catholicism and Orthodoxy following the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39) and its aftermath²⁸. The foundation of the Latin chapel at Sinai presumably resulted from these new conditions, which necessitated the creation of a separate place of worship for Catholic believers²⁹.

If the monastery contained no separate Latin chapel in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we are forced to reconsider the theory that the considerable number of Crusader works at Sinai, in particular two thirteenth century templon beams, belonged to such a building (Figs 1 and 2)³⁰. Without denying that a number of "crusader" icons had been indeed presented to Sinai as pilgrims offerings, it may well be that the explanation for the presence in the monastery of these epistyles, as well as of other artefacts which exhibit a notable variety in iconography, styles and models, lies in the monastery's many metochia (dependencies) throughout the Crusader territories, in places such as Acre, Jerusalem and Kerak³¹. It would have been natural for the furnishings of these dependencies – the relatively small templon beams and possibly the icons as well – to have been transported to

the mother foundation after the metochia ceased to function, but we may also wonder if some of the icons originated not in the metochia, but in purely Crusader churches, and were removed to Sinai when the churches were abandoned after the Crusaders left the region³².

Returning to the evidence of pilgrim narratives, we find that references to portable objects are thin on the ground. It is true that they contain extensive descriptions of St Catherine's marble sarcophagus and of the rituals surrounding her relics, but icons and other artefacts are either ignored or given a cursory mention. In 1335, for example, James of Verona relates how there were several churches inside the monastery apart from the katholikon, and that some housed "painted panels, ...crosses, lamps and many ornaments"³³. A similar lack of detail is found in the Italian Nicola da Martoni's description, dating from 1394-95, of the marble slabs, mosaic ornamentation, numerous painted icons and lamps to be found in the katholikon³⁴.

Yet two pilgrims have provided a full and meticulous description which may enable us to recapture the appearance of certain cult objects and their location in the monastery. The first of these is Thietmar, a German who visited Sinai in 1217 and left a valuable account which not only testifies to the appearance of the monastery at a particularly critical period in its history and development, but also contains much precise and specific detail, avoiding the generalities which might cause us to question the accuracy of his remarks³⁵. He notes briefly the appearance of the katholikon and also comments on the monastic routine, but he provides a fuller picture of the sacred sites of the monastery. His descriptions of the saint's relics, the holy oil and the associated rituals have

²⁶ *The Wanderings of Felix Fabri*, Aubrey Stuart trans., London 1893-97, vol. II:2 (= *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, vol. X), 612-13, 619 (henceforth: *Felix Fabri*).

²⁷ *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte (1470-1471)*, transl. by J. Heers and G. de Groer, Paris 1978, 227.

²⁸ D. J. Geanakoplos, "The Council of Florence (1438-39) and the Problem of Union Between the Greek and Latin Churches", *ChHist* 24 (1955), 324-46; J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959, esp. 349-411. On the close relations between the monastery and the papacy and the West generally, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, Drandaki, "The Sinai Monastery", op.cit. (n. 10), 30-4, with earlier bibliography.

²⁹ This view is expressed by Rabino, op.cit. (n. 3) 35; a similar conclusion is reached by Barbara Zeitler in her study of the two "Crusader" epistyles at Sinai, op.cit. (n. 25), 228.

³⁰ Zeitler, op.cit. (n. 25), passim (with a review of the early bibliography).

³¹ G. Hofmann S. J., *Sinai und Rom*, Rome 1927 (= *Orientalia Christiana* 37); N. Coureas, "The Orthodox Monastery of Mt Sinai and Papal Pro-

tection of its Cretan and Cypriot Properties", in M. Balard (ed.), *Autour de la première croisade*, Paris 1996, 475-84; T. Papamastorakis, "The 'Crusader' Icons of the Exhibition", in *Pilgrimage to Sinai* (n. 3), 58; Drandaki, "The Sinai Monastery" (n. 10), 32. In the latter article I wrote erroneously that the papal bulls of the thirteenth century cedet to Sinai, among other possessions, the Constantinopolitan monastery of St George in Mangana. In fact the bulls refer to "duas confratrias" of Mangana, not the whole monastery.

³² Papamastorakis, op.cit., 50.

³³ "In illo monasterio, sunt alie plures capelle devote, tamen parve, in quibus ego fui, bene ornate, in quibus sunt plures res magne et multe devocionis, videlicet tabule pictae, ancone parve, cruces et lampades et plura ornamenta", Jacobus de Verona, 230.

³⁴ "Ecclesia Sancte Catherine... astratata lapidibus marmoreis et laboratis musaice et picta multis picturis, et cone multe sunt pulcherrime in illa. Est maxima quantitas lampadarum ardentium; nunquam tot vidi in aliqua ecclesia", Nicolaus de Martoni, 607.

³⁵ Thietmar, 41-7. For an English translation of much of the text, Pringle, op.cit. (n. 3), 52-3.



Fig. 1. Iconostasis beam, second half of the thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

already been the object of study³⁶, but his account of the visit to the chapel of the Burning Bush which preceded the veneration of St Catherine is less familiar but equally valuable. Having noted that the Bush was venerated by both Saracens and Christians, who approached it barefoot, he continues: “the original Bush was taken away and divided up among the Christians for relics, but a gold bush resembling it was made from sheets of gold; on it is a gold figure of the Lord, and on the right of the bush a gold image of Moses who is removing his shoes. Another figure of Moses stands on the left of the bush, as if barefooted, with his shoes removed, in the place where the Lord sent him on his mission to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, to lead away his people”³⁷.

What Theitmar seems to be telling us is that in 1217 there was a sacred object on the site of the Old Testament bush, whose precise form is difficult to grasp. Yet his specific ref-

erence to an artefact made of gold sheets in the shape of the original bush suggests that it was a three-dimensional metal work³⁸, or, most likely as we shall see, a metal relief image. The description “factus...ex laminis aureis” probably precludes a painted panel, however, as in all the known icons the Bush is coloured red to represent the flames and to distinguish it from the other vegetation (Figs 4-6 and 9).

Whatever the form of the object Theitmar saw, his description enables us to establish the iconography beyond reasonable doubt. It must have been a symmetrical composition centred on the bush with the figure of Christ upon it, and with an image of Moses on either side: on the Bush’s right he was depicted taking off his shoes and on its left accepting his mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The first of these is well known from a number of such portrayals both in Sinai and elsewhere³⁹, but the second seems to differ from the

³⁶ Pringle, *op.cit.*; Patterson Ševčenko, “St Catherine”, *op.cit.* (n. 8); Drandaki, *op.cit.* (n. 10), 34-6.

³⁷ “Rubus quidem sublatus est et inter Christianos pro reliquiis distractus, ad instar autem illius rubi factus est aureus rubus ex laminis aureis, et ymago Domini aurea super rubum, et ymago Moysi aurea stans ad dexteram rubi, discalcians se. Stat et alia ymago Moysi aurea in sinistra parte rubi tamquam discalcia et nudis pedibus. Ubi Dominus dedit ei legationem ad Pharaonem, regem Egypti, de educendo populo suo.”, Thietmar, 42, § XVII. Part of the passage is translated in Pringle, *op.cit.* (n. 3), 52.

³⁸ Thietmar’s reference to an artificial bush recalls the famous artificial tree in the Sacred Palace with its mechanical songbirds, described by Liutprand of Cremona (C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453, Sources and Documents*, New Jersey 1972, 209), and the successor of Theophanes, Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia* IV, 21 (173,1-17, ed. I. Bekker, CFHB). On the automata at the Sacred Palace, G. Breet, “The Automata in the Byzantine ‘Throne of Solomon’”, *Speculum* XXIX (1954), 477-87. Cf. the much later metal trees on Mt

Athos, in Iviron and Vatopaidi monasteries (A. Ballian, “Post-Byzantine and Other Small Art Works”, in *The Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi, Tradition - History - Art*, Mount Athos 1998, vol. 1, 534; vol. 2, 23, fig. 8).

³⁹ Depictions of the veneration of the bush at Sinai are found on the well-known Early Christian Moses cross (K. Weitzmann and I. Ševčenko, “The Moses Cross at Sinai”, *DOP* 17 (1963), 385-98, repr. in K. Weitzmann, *Studies in the Arts of Sinai*, Princeton 1982, no. IV), on sixth-century mosaics on the east wall of the basilica (K. Weitzmann, “Mosaics”, in Manafis (ed.), *Sinai* (n. 3), fig. 8) and on a group of portable icons relating to the locus sanctus of the monastery, K. Weitzmann, “Loca Sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine”, *DOP* 28 (1974), 33-55, esp. 53ff. repr. in *Studies* (op.cit.), no. II; D. Mouriki, “Icons from the 12th to the 15th Century”, in Manafis (ed.), *Sinai* (n. 3), 111, fig. 36; ead., “A Pair of Early 13th-Century Moses Icons at Sinai with the Scenes of the Burning Bush and the Receiving of the Law”, *ΔΧΑΕ ΙΣΤ* (1991-92), 171-84. For depictions of the subject generally, see the examples collected in Th. Aliprantis, *Moses auf dem Berg Sinai:*



Fig. 2. Iconostasis beam, second half of the thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

conventional representation in which Moses receives the tablets of the law, as it depicts the episode from Exodus which immediately follows that of the vision of the Burning Bush. This relates how Moses removed his shoes in veneration at the holy site and was commanded to return to Egypt to liberate the chosen people and lead them to the Promised Land. As he feared that the task was beyond his powers, God bade him cast his staff onto the ground, where it turned into a serpent, but when Moses grasped the serpent by the tail, it again became a rod (Exodus 3:1-4:17). This staff became Moses' instrument for performing the miracles which enabled the Israelites to escape from Egypt and survive their journey to the Promised Land: as such, it was recognised as the symbol of the mission entrusted to Moses by God beside the Burning Bush.

The image described by Thietmar is a faithful rendering in

pictorial terms of the biblical episode which was enacted at the locus sanctus of Sinai, while its iconography, which gives a central place to the bush and to Christ upon it, epitomises the Christian tradition in which the soteriological promise to Moses of the Exodus of the Jews is associated with the mystery of the Incarnation of the divine Word and thereby with the salvation of mankind⁴⁰. Yet Thietmar also makes it clear that the Virgin, the main instrument in God's plan, was not portrayed in person here, unlike most examples from the thirteenth century onwards. Her presence is merely hinted at through her identification with the Bush which bears a representation of the Lord, just as the Virgin bore the incarnated Word.

The depiction of Christ upon the Bush is familiar from western versions of the subject, which begin as early as the twelfth century: examples can be found in important manu-

Die Ikonographie der Berufung des Moses und des Empfangs des Gesetzestafeln, Munich 1986, passim.

⁴⁰ Mouriki, "Αι βιβλικαὶ προεικονίσεις", op.cit. (n. 4).

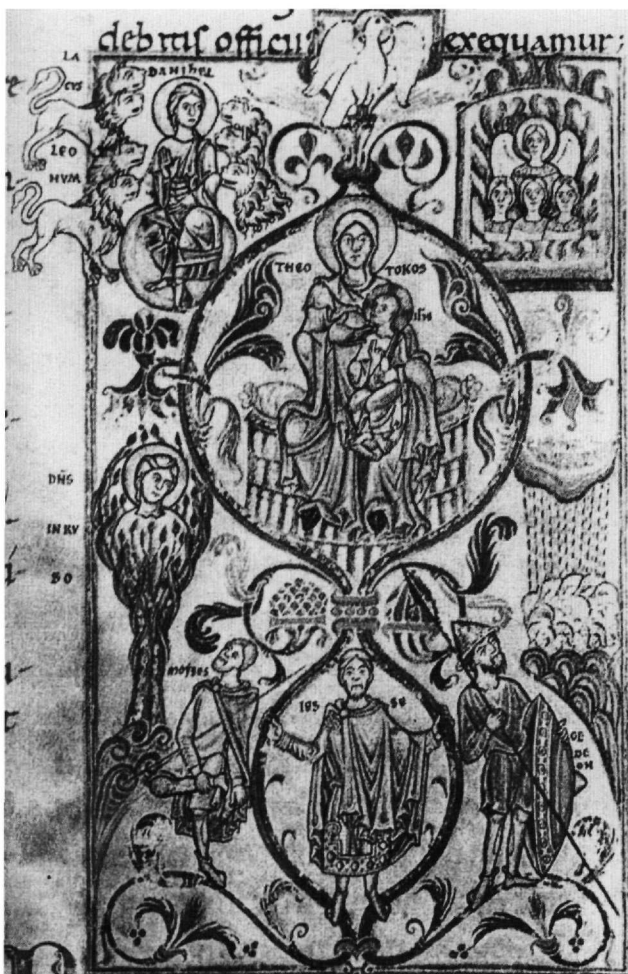


Fig. 3. Citeaux Lectionary MS 641, fol. 40v, c. 1115-25.

scripts such as the Citeaux Lectionary MS 641 (c. 1115-25) (Fig. 3)⁴¹, the Bible Moralisée MS 270b in the Bodleian Library (second quarter of the thirteenth century) and the

Arsenal Bible MS 5211, which was executed in Acre shortly after 1250⁴². Yet in all of these the scene is limited to Moses' veneration of the bush, and Moses is depicted only once, in the act of loosening his sandals.

In Byzantine art, however, we can find an exact parallel to the configuration described by Thietmar in two manuscripts of the homilies of the monk James of Kokkinobaphos (Par. gr. 1208 and Vat. gr. 1162)⁴³. They are known to have been executed in a leading manuscript workshop in Constantinople in the mid-twelfth century, and one of them was commissioned for the Sevastokratorissa Irene herself⁴⁴. In both books the miniature preceding the third homily is headed "Mount Sinai: Moses and the bush" (Fig. 4)⁴⁵, and the composition is symmetrical; the bush in the middle contains a roundel with the bust of Christ Emanuel, and a figure of Moses appears on either side as in the scenes described by Thietmar-taking off his shoes on the left and holding the serpentine rod on the right, as he converses with the angel who entrusts him with his mission.

We know of no surviving Byzantine representation comparable to Kokkinobaphos' depiction of Christ in the bush flanked by images of Moses⁴⁶. Yet in relating that he witnessed such a scene at Sinai Thietmar does something more than providing a description of a precisely similar composition: he suggests a link between a lavish Constantinopolitan manuscript and the cult object in the actual locus sanctus of the Burning Bush, the chapel of the Bush at Sinai. This link is unlikely to have been fortuitous. It suggests that the iconography observed at Sinai was well known in Constantinople, at least among the capital's intellectual elite, and this possibility is strengthened by the attested presence of Sinaite monks in the capital in the twelfth century, two of them as members of the emperor's circle: indeed a certain Georgios Sinaitis was included in the embassy sent by Manuel Komnenos to the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III, in

⁴¹ C. R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200*, Yale 1993, 214-16, fig. 210.

⁴² H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford 1957, 58, n. 3, pl. 63; Weiss, *Art and Crusades* (n. 2), figs 34, 57.

⁴³ J. Anderson, "The illustrated Sermons of James the Monk: Their Dates, Order and Place in the History of Byzantine Art", *Viator* 22 (1991), 69-120; I. Hutter and P. Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar des Mönchs Jakobos von Kokkinobaphos, Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1162* (= Codices e Vaticanis selecti 79), Vatican City 1991; see also recently the doctoral thesis by K. Linardou, *Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books: the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts (Vaticanus graecus 1162 and Parisinus graecus 1208) and their Illustration*, unpublished PhD diss., University of Birmingham 2004. I am grateful to the author, Kelly Linardou, for al-

lowing me to make use of it.

⁴⁴ Linardou, *op.cit.*, 229-58 (with a review of the early bibliography).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 70-5, pls 42-43.

⁴⁶ The only representation at all comparable to that of Kokkinobaphos appears in the depiction of the same scene at Lesnovo (1349), where Moses is also portrayed twice, though in a different manner and context: the first image shows him asleep (?) and the second talking with the Lord who is shown behind the Bush, S. Gabelić, *The Monastery of Lesnovo, History and Painting*, Belgrade 1998 (in Serbian with English summary) 174, 280, pl. XLVI. Christ is portrayed in a manner very reminiscent of the western examples mentioned above (n. 41, 42), but at Lesnovo the Virgin is also shown in the midst of the Bush in grisaille, the standard image of Palaiologan painting (see below n. 54).



Fig. 4. Homilies of the monk James of Kokkinobaphos, mid-twelfth century, Paris, BN, MS gr. 1208.

1177⁴⁷. If what Thietmar describes was in fact a luxurious metalwork artefact, it seems highly probable that it was

created in the capital, though its date remains an open question, as the only clues available to us are the parallel iconography of the mid-twelfth century manuscripts and the terminus ante quem of 1217 provided by Thietmar's narrative.

The similarities between Kokkinobaphos' manuscripts and the image in the chapel of the Bush raise an issue which has always proved an intractable one for the scholar, namely the extent of the links between Sinai and the Byzantine capital prior to the Latin occupation in 1204. Documentary evidence is scanty⁴⁸ and it is really only the superb Komnenian icons housed in the monastery which hint, albeit indirectly, at the existence of channels of communication between Sinai and the major artistic centre that was Constantinople⁴⁹.

The subsequent history of the golden image at Sinai is shrouded in mystery. I could find only one hint of it in later pilgrim narratives: Felix Fabri (1484) in his detailed description of the chapel of the Burning Bush observes that "beneath the altar is the place where the bush is believed to have stood, and in the pavement there is a brazen plate, whereon is carved the figure of the burning bush, and of Moses sitting down putting off his shoes"⁵⁰. Despite the brief reference, this "brazen plate" could indeed reflect the golden image of Thietmar although by contrast with him, Fabri seems rather unimpressed by it. In any case, if we accept that both pilgrims refer to the same object, Fabri's testimony is very helpful in elucidating the original form and function of this image: it was in all probability a metal relief revetment of the early Christian marble slab that is still in situ under the altar of the chapel⁵¹.

Further if indirect evidence is offered by two portable icons, both probably dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, which seem to bear an interesting iconographic resemblance to the object Thietmar found in the chapel in 1217. The first of these, still housed in the monastery, is a

⁴⁷ K. Amantos, *Σύντομος ἱστορία* (n. 3), 42-3. F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453*, 2: *Regesten von 1025-1204*, Munich and Berlin 1925, 86, no. 1526.

⁴⁸ Amantos, *op.cit.*, 42-6. To the evidence of sources recorded by Amantos there should be added the Sinaite liturgical diptych of 1166, which indicates that even after the Latin occupation of the area the Sinaites continued to mention in their prayers the Orthodox patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch and not the pope or the Latin bishops, F.E. Brightman and C.E. Hammond, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, Oxford 1896, 501-3; B. Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church*, London 1980, 182, 185; Drandaki, *op.cit.* (n. 10), 28-30.

⁴⁹ Typical high-quality Komnenian painted works are the icons of the Enthroned Virgin and Child flanked by prophets and saints (mid-12th

century), (M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, exh. cat., Benaki Museum, Athens-Milan 2000, no. 28, by T. Papamastorakis) the Miracle at Chonai and the Annunciation (E. Evans and W.D. Wixom (eds), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1997, nos 66 and 246 by N. Patter-son Ševčenko and Annemarie Weyl Carr).

⁵⁰ Felix Fabri, 607-8.

⁵¹ M. Μυριανθεος-Κουφοπουλου, "Το παρεκκλήσιο της Αγίας Βάτου στο καθολικό της Μονής Σινά", *Εικοστό Πέμπτο Συμπόσιο βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης. Πρόγραμμα και περιλήψεις εισηγήσεων και ανακοινώσεων*, Athens 2005, 90. The suggestion that Thietmar's metal relief image could have been a revetment of the marble slab was first made by Prof. Alexei Lidov, to whom I am indebted.



Fig. 5. Icon with St Catherine, the Virgin of the Bush and Moses, second half of the thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

group representation of the sacred figures associated with Sinai (Fig. 5)⁵². St Catherine, in imperial attire, stands on the left, with at her side the Virgin η $\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$, shooting forth fiery branches and holding the Emmanuel in her arms in front of the flames. The Virgin is flanked by a double image of Moses, who unties his sandals on the left, while on the

right, instead of receiving the tablets of the Commandments, he is depicted retreating from her presence with his head turned back towards her. The second icon, now in the Patriarchate at Jerusalem (Fig. 6), shows the Virgin in the Burning Bush with the Emmanuel in a roundel on her breast⁵³. She is again flanked by two representations of Moses: on the left he kneels to remove his shoes and on the right he raises his arms to her, proclaiming: "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight." (Exodus 3.3).

The basic difference between these two icons and the representations in Theitmar's narrative and in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts lies in the omission of Moses' rod and the addition of the figure of the Virgin in the panels. This last clarifies the icons' message, as an unambiguous identification of the Virgin with the Burning Bush precludes the necessity for prior theological knowledge and complex interpretative skills on the part of the viewer⁵⁴. Despite the variations, the unusual design of the two icons, with an image of Moses on either side of the bush, may well reflect the appearance of the original work situated in the chapel, as described by Thietmar. This comment is especially applicable to the first icon, not only in view of its location at Sinai, but also because an object incorporating in a single composition all the monastery's venerated figures might well be expected to reproduce the iconography of the cult images located in the various sanctuaries on the mountain.

The second pilgrim to offer information about such artefacts is the Tuscan monk Niccolo di Poggibonsi (1346-50)⁵⁵. His precision and eye for detail are exceptional in this type of writing, as are his familiarity with works of art and his ability – unusual in a traveller – to distinguish between the various techniques used in their production, as various scholars have noted⁵⁶. The visit to Sinai made a deep impression on him, and he describes the area in detail, relating how he wandered round the monastery making notes on two tablets he had with him, in case anything he saw should later slip his mind⁵⁷. Niccolo describes the site of the monastery and its

⁵² K. Weitzmann, "Loca Sancta", op.cit. (n. 37), fig. 51; Patterson Ševčenko, "St Catherine", op.cit. (n. 8); for a coloured reproduction of the icon, Drandaki, op.cit. (n. 10), fig. 2.3.

⁵³ M. Garidis, "Icônes du XIIIe et du XIVe siècle dans l'aire du patriarcat de Jérusalem", in *Ενθυρία. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler* (=Byzantina Sorbonensia 16), Paris 1998, 225-38, esp. 226-29, fig. 1. The icon has been dated to the late twelfth century, but iconographic and decorative features discernible in the photograph suggest a dating after the mid-thirteenth century.

⁵⁴ The Virgin is also depicted within the Bush in other "crusader" icons of the second half of the thirteenth century at Sinai, *Byzantium Faith and Power* (n. 25), 355-6, no. 214 (J. Folda) and K. Weitzmann, "Four

Icons on Mount Sinai: New Aspects in Crusader Painting", *JÖB* 21 (1972), 279-93, fig. 9, repr. in id., *Studies* (n. 25), no. XIII). The Virgin and Child are also shown in the Bush in an Armenian manuscript of 1286, Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", op.cit. (n. 4). This becomes the standard iconography in Palaiologan wallpainting from the fourteenth century onwards (see above n. 4 and 46).

⁵⁵ Niccolò da Poggibonsi, chapters CCVIII-CCXXX.

⁵⁶ Niccolo's familiarity with works of art has been attributed to his origins in Tuscany, an area with flourishing artistic production in the fourteenth century, *ibid.*, Introduction by T. Bellorini and E. Hoade, esp. XI-XXVIII.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 105, chapter CCVIII.

appearance, and he records the number of the chapels in the katholikon (eight), the chapels inside the walls (twenty five) and the churches in the area occupied by Sinaite monks (fifteen). In addition to details of the monastic routine, he, like everyone else, mentions the tomb and shrine of St Catherine, the chapel of the Burning Bush (the only one of which he gives a description), the ascent to the twin peaks and the churches visited en route.

His first reference to cult images comes as he enters the katholikon. On passing into the narthex Niccolo found himself facing the closed central doors of the nave, which dated from the time of Justinian⁵⁸. On them was “a mosaic image of the holy Mary with her little Son in her arms: to one side stands the precious saint Catherine and on the other Moses: in front of these figures – that is, above [or “on”] the door – three silver lamps are constantly burning”⁵⁹. It could be that Niccolo is here describing a now lost mosaic icon depicting the monastery’s three venerated figures, but more probably he is referring to three separate panels – each lit by a large lamp – of which the image of the Virgin and Child was mosaic. As I have suggested elsewhere, this last may be the sole mosaic icon with this subject still housed at Sinai, which dates from the late twelfth-early thirteenth century (Fig. 7)⁶⁰. The carved doors of the church still contain holes and nails in various places, which could have been used for suspending icons, while the twin holes on the top of the now bare bevelled, integral frame of the mosaic panel were obviously made to hang it in position⁶¹.

Identification of the other two icons, of Moses and St Catherine, with specific works known to us is not an easy task. The monastery contains a large number of images of Moses dating from before the mid-fourteenth century and we cannot begin to speculate which of them was originally located in the place mentioned by Niccolo. By contrast we know of only one icon of this date devoted exclusively to Catherine, the celebrated early thirteenth-century *vita* icon which could well have been placed on the door of the main church (Fig. 8)⁶². However Niccolo refers to a second image of St Catherine, in the sanctuary of the katholikon: in the



Fig. 6. Icon with the Virgin of the Bush and Moses, second half of the thirteenth century. Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

apse, the most sacred part of the church closer to the saint’s shrine, he describes a painted representation of the Lord, with the Virgin on his right and Catherine on his left⁶³. In

⁵⁸ The nave was entered through two small doors on either side of the central door; they were covered with black material (*ibid.* 106, chapter CCXI).

⁵⁹ “Sopra la detta porta si è lavorato, d’ opera mosaica, santa Maria col suo Figliuolo in braccio: dal’ una parte sta quella preziosa santa Caterina, e dall’altra Moisèe dinanzi a queste figure, cioè sopra la porta, si ci arde sempre tre lampane d’argento”, *ibid.*, chapter CCXI.

⁶⁰ Drandaki, *op.cit.* (n. 10), 36-8.

⁶¹ Like most published photographs of the mosaic icon, the reproduction here unfortunately does not show the plain wooden frame with the holes.

⁶² *Byzantium. Faith and Power* (n. 25), no. 201, by N. Patterson Ševčenko. St Catherine is portrayed in other icons at Sinai, but with other figures. Apart from the icon discussed here, where she is linked with the Virgin and Child / Bush and the double portrait of Moses (Fig. 5), two icons (12th and 13th century respectively) show her with St Marina (Soteriou, *op.cit.* (n. 6), fig. 50; K. Weitzmann, “Icon Painting in the Cru-

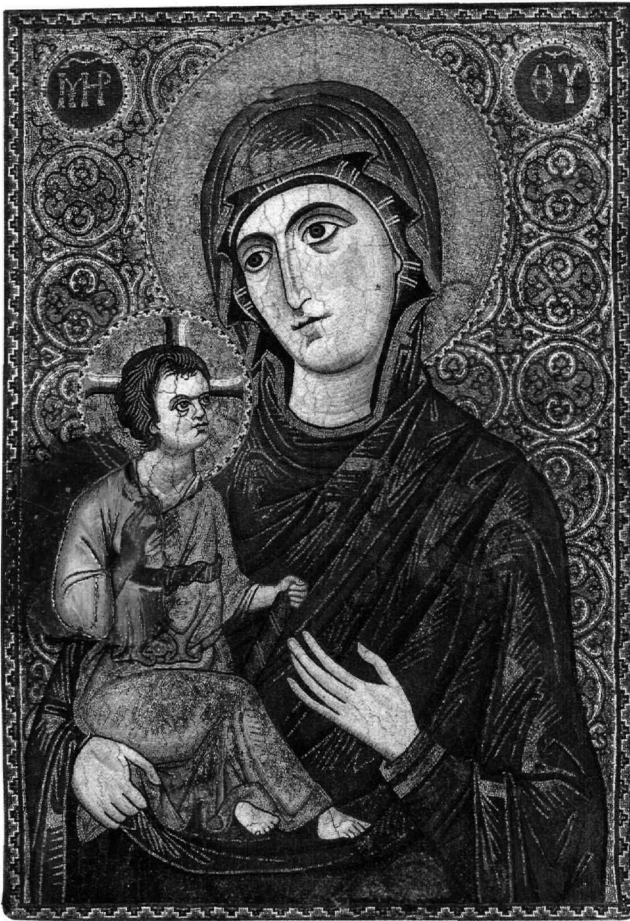


Fig. 7. Mosaic icon with the Virgin and Child, late twelfth-early thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

these circumstances we can probably do no more than conjecture that in the mid-fourteenth century the celebrated *vita* icon of the saint could be found in one of the two locations mentioned by the Tuscan pilgrim.

sader Kingdom”, *DOP* 20 (1966), 73, fig. 50 (repr. in id., *Studies* (n. 25), no. XII). Weitzmann mentions the existence of a considerable number of (as yet unpublished) icons depicting the pair of Sinaite saints, Catherine and Marina.

⁶³ “Dinanzi dall’altare, nella tribuna, si è dipinto lo Salvatore: dalla parte ritta si è santa Maria, e dalla sinistra si è santa Caterina”, Niccolò da Poggibonsi, chapter CCXII.

⁶⁴ “E sopra lo muro si è una tavola dipinta, come Moissè divide lo mare Rosso colla verga in mano, e come l’esercito di Faraone annegò nel mare Rosso; e in quello luogo proprio del mare Rosso io fui, e è presso a Babilonia a cinque giornate. Nella detta chiesa si è figurato per ordine tutta questa storia di Moissè”, *ibid.*, chapter CCXXIII.

There is less of a problem in identifying another of the icons described by Niccolo. As he reached the summit, he came upon the beautiful small church of Moses, which is divided in two by the templon on which hung a painted panel depicting how Moses divided the Red Sea with his rod in his hand, so that the Israelites crossed over and Pharaoh’s army was drowned. “I myself was at this very place on the Red Sea”, he says, “which is five day’s journey from Babylonia. In this church the whole story of Moses is depicted from beginning to end”⁶⁴. The detail of the description clearly points to a *vita* icon of Moses, and it can be identified with some certainty as the only one still housed in the monastery, which dates from the early thirteenth century (Fig. 9)⁶⁵.

The Moses icon is the only one to be described in such detail by Niccolo: the reason for this is self-evident, and it gives us an insight into the motivation behind the composition of these narratives. Niccolo’s phrase “In quello luogo proprio...io fui.” betrays the fact that his emphasis on the episodes depicted in the icon is intended to stress to the reader that he has personally visited the site on the Red Sea where they took place. The details of the icon are significant, not merely as illustrations of the biblical story but because they serve the pilgrim as a kind of memento and even as a justification for his entire journey.

As far I know Niccolo’s narrative provides the only extant literary authority for the placement and function of a *vita* icon in a Byzantine religious environment⁶⁶. In this connection I should like to end with an episode from the later history of the icon, in order to demonstrate the remarkable adaptability of such works, observable even today in places such as Sinai, where devotions never cease but needs and circumstances are subject to constant change. In his verse history of Sinai (1577-92) the Greek Metropolitan of Rhodes, Paisios Agiastopolitis, describes icons in the chapel of the Burning Bush: “In the western part is the story / of Moses, whose fortitude is known to all. / These are the mi-

⁶⁵ D. Mouriki, “A Moses Cycle on a Sinai Icon of the Early Thirteenth Century”, in Doula Mouriki et al. (eds), *Byzantine East, Latin West, Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, Princeton 1995, 531-46.

⁶⁶ Drandaki, *op.cit.* (n. 10), 38. On *vita* icons generally: N. Patterson Ševčenko, “The *Vita* Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer”, *DOP* 53 (1999), 149-65; *Byzantium Faith and Power* (n. 25), nos 201 and 228 by N. Patterson Ševčenko. On their function in the West, J. Cannon, “Beyond the Limitations of Visual Typology: Reconsidering the Function and Audience of Three *Vita* Panels of Women Saints c. 1300”, in Victor M. Schmidt (ed.), *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento* (=Studies in the History of Art 61), New Haven and London 2002, 291-313.



Fig. 8. Icon with Saint Catherine and Scenes of her Life, early thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

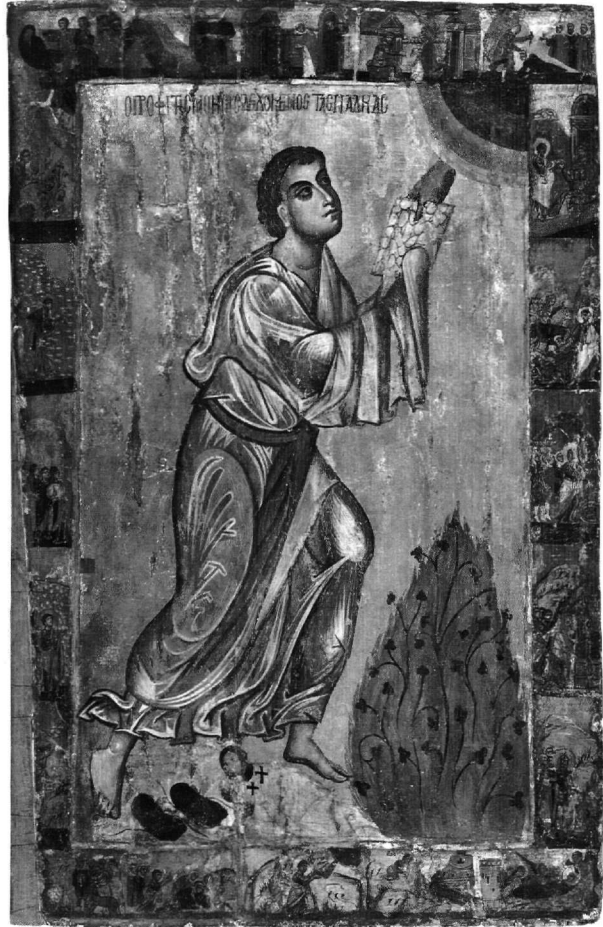


Fig. 9. Icon with Moses and scenes from his life, early thirteenth century. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

rales, they say, which in Egypt / he performed against Pharaoh through the incomprehensible will [of God]⁶⁷. This is a description of the same *vita* icon, which had been removed to the chapel of the Bush, the other site in the monastery where Moses was venerated. The transfer of the icon can probably be explained by the fact that at the time

Paisios was writing the church on the summit was no longer dedicated to Moses, but rather to Christ the Saviour⁶⁸, but it also shows how, in Sinai at least, a *vita* icon could perform a continuous function, despite altered circumstances, in a place (or places) specifically dedicated to the holy figure depicted therein.

⁶⁷ “Πρὸς δὲ τὸ δυτικὸν αὐτοῦ μέρος ἡ ἱστορία / τοῦ Μωυσῆ, οὗ ἅπαντες ἔγνωσαν τὴν καρτερίαν / Τὰ θαύματα (φασίν) εἰσὶν, ἅπερ ἐν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ / εἰργάσατο πρὸς Φαραὼ νεύσει ἀκαταλήπτῳ”, Paisios Agiapistolites, Metropolitan of Rhodes, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Σινῆ καὶ τῶν Περιχώρων αὐτοῦ, ἔμμετρον σύγγραμμα, συνταχθέν μεταξὺ τῶν ἐτῶν 1577-1592*, A. Papadopoulos Kerameus (ed.), St. Petersburg 1891, 34, lines 847-50.

⁶⁸ “Ἐκεῖ γοῦν εἰς τὴν Κορυφὴν τὸ σπήλαιον ὄραται / ἀριστερὰ τῆς ἐκκλησιᾶς καὶ πιστῶς προσκυνᾶται / Καὶ γὰρ ναὸς περικαλλῆς μετὰ σιδηρὰν θύραν / Ἔστιν καὶ ὀνομάζουσιν Κύριον καὶ Σωτῆρα”, Paisios Agiapistolites, *op.cit.*, 3-4, lines 65-68. This renaming had already taken place by the time Felix Fabri visited the monastery (1484), as he also relates that the chapel on the summit “is called St Saviour’s church”, Felix Fabri, 558.

Η ΜΟΝΗ ΣΙΝΑ ΜΕΣΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΑ ΚΕΙΜΕΝΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΗΤΩΝ ΤΟΥ 13ου ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ 14ου ΑΙΩΝΑ

Το Σινά ήταν για τον πατέρα μου ένας τόπος αγαπητός, πηγή ανεξάντλητης γνώσης για την επιστήμη στην οποία αφιέρωσε τη ζωή του αλλά και χώρος έμπνευσης και ευλογίας για τους πνευματικούς του προσανατολισμούς. Η παρούσα μελέτη, επικεντρωμένη στους προσκυνητές που πήγαν στο Σινά ακολουθώντας τις δικές τους αναζητήσεις, δεν θα μπορούσε παρά να είναι αφιερωμένη στη μνήμη του.

Από τις σωζόμενες προσκυνηματικές αφηγήσεις του 13ου και του 14ου αιώνα συμπεραίνεται ότι οι πόλοι έλξης των προσκυνητών στο Σινά περιλάμβαναν το λείψανο της αγίας Αικατερίνης, τη Βάτο και την Αγία Κορυφή. Από το 14ο αιώνα στην προσκυνηματική τοπογραφία του Σινά προστίθεται και η κορυφή της Αγίας Αικατερίνης, όπου σύμφωνα με την παράδοση είχε βρεθεί το σκήνωμά της. Ιδιαίτερη σημασία έχουν επίσης όσα δεν αναφέρουν οι προσκυνητές στις αφηγήσεις τους. Κανένας από τους προσκυνητές της περιόδου δεν κάνει λόγο για την ύπαρξη λατινικού παρεκκλησίου. Αντιθέτως, ορισμένοι αναφέρουν ότι παρακολούθησαν στο καθολικό της μονής την ορθόδοξη λειτουργία στα ελληνικά και ότι κοινωνήσαν από το χέρι του αρχιεπισκόπου.

Η πρώτη αναφορά στην ύπαρξη λατινικού παρεκκλησίου εντοπίζεται στην αφήγηση του Anselme Adorno, το 1470-71. Φαίνεται ότι τομή στις σχέσεις της μονής με τους καθολικούς αποτέλεσε, όπως και σε όλο τον ορθόδοξο κόσμο, η Σύνοδος της Φερράρας-Φλωρεντίας (1438-39) και τα γεγονότα που ακολούθησαν, βαθαίνοντας το χάσμα μεταξύ των δύο χριστιανικών κοινοτήτων. Η ίδρυση του λατινικού παρεκκλησίου στο Σινά πρέπει να ήταν αποτέλεσμα αυτών των νέων συνθηκών. Ιδιαίτερα σημαντική είναι η αφήγηση του γερμανού

προσκυνητή Thietmar (1217). Κατά την περιγραφή του παρεκκλησίου της Βάτου ο Thietmar περιγράφει λεπτομερώς την εικονογραφία ενός μεταλλικού, «χρυσού» έργου που βρισκόταν στη θέση της αυθεντικής βάτου. Απεικόνιζε στο κέντρο τη βάτο με τον Χριστό επάνω της και εκατέρωθεν διπλή απεικόνιση του Μωυσή. Η εικονογραφία που περιγράφει ο Thietmar ανταποκρίνεται απολύτως στη μικρογραφία που προηγείται της τρίτης ομιλίας του Ιάκωβου Κοκκινοβάφου, στα δύο γνωστά κωνσταντινουπολίτικα χειρόγραφα των μέσων του 12ου αιώνα. Επίσης, ανάλογη εικονογραφία, με διπλή απεικόνιση του Μωυσή εντοπίζεται και σε δύο εικόνες του 13ου αιώνα. Ως προς τον προορισμό του πολυτελούς έργου που εντυπωσίασε τον Thietmar, ίσως επρόκειτο για μεταλλική επένδυση του παλαιοχριστιανικού θωρακίου, το οποίο βρίσκεται στη θέση της Βάτου, στο δάπεδο του παρεκκλησίου.

Ο δεύτερος προσκυνητής που μας προσφέρει πληροφορίες για συγκεκριμένα λατρευτικά έργα του Σινά είναι ο μοναχός Niccolò da Poggibonsi (1346-1350) από την Τοσκάνη. Μεταξύ άλλων, αναφέρεται στη θέση μιας ψηφιδωτής Βρεφοκρατούσας πάνω στις κλειστές τότε, ιουστινιάνειες, μεσαίες θύρες του κυρίως ναού. Αυτή η ψηφιδωτή εικόνα πιθανώς ταυτίζεται με τη μόνη γνωστή ανάλογη εικόνα του όψιμου 12ου ή πρώιμου 13ου αιώνα που φυλάσσεται στη μονή. Ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζει επίσης η ρητή αναφορά του Niccolò da Poggibonsi στη θέση της γνωστής βιογραφικής εικόνας του Μωυσή, του 13ου αιώνα, την οποία είδε ανηρητημένη στο τέμπλο του μικρού ναού της Αγίας Κορυφής, που ήταν τότε αφιερωμένος στον προφήτη. Η ίδια εικόνα μεταφέρθηκε αργότερα, πριν από το 1577-1592 στο παρεκκλήσι της Βάτου.

Sources of photographs

Figs 1-2: H. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, nos 220, 235. Fig. 3: C.R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200*, fig. 210. Fig. 4: K. Linardou, *Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books*: (see n. 43), pl. 43. Fig. 5: Photo: Spyros Panayiotopoulos. Fig. 6: M.

Garidis, "Icônes du XIIIe et du XIVe siècle dans l'aire du patriarcat de Jérusalem", in *Ενψυχία* (see n. 53), fig. 1. Fig. 7: H. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, no. 207. Fig. 8: *Ibid.*, no. 201. Fig. 9: Photo: Spyros Panayiotopoulos.